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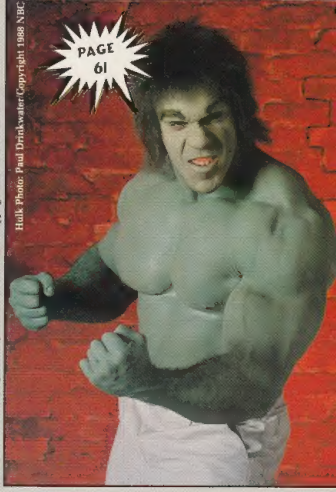

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WORD BALLOONS

Heaven?

When I was young—which is longer ago than I care to admit—it was really hard to buy comics. I lived in Big Spring, Texas. They called the decade the '60s. And I was on a quest.

There was the trip to the 7-11 where, in addition to the cherry Icee (later named Slurpee and Slushee), I would pick up *Tales to Astonish* (where "Bruce Banner is the Hulk") and maybe, *Superman's Pal, Jimmy Olsen*.But to find *Avengers* (with art by Don Heck and later, John Buscema) and the real *Flash*,(i.e. Barry Allen), I had to cross that busy, dusty, Texas highway to Toby's (a convenience mart later bought out by 7-11). The quest seldom ended there.

Later, there would be the journey to downtown Big Spring and my favorite place, Pancho's Newsstand, where lurked *Daredevil* (mostly the Gene Colan Man Without Fear), and *Batman* (hard to find, maybe due to the Adam West "camp" craze). Still missing a few key issues, later odysseys would have to be made to the other area 7-11s, selected supermarkets, the TG&Y dime store, Woolworth's (which carried, paradoxically, *Classics Illustrated* and *Sgt. Fury*), and ultimately, one of my favorite used bookstores in the world, that one run by the one-armed WWII vet and his wife, the place where I discovered Doc Savage paperbacks, the shop that sold comics in near-mint condition for a nickel, six for a quarter—comic book heaven. (There *should* be a place like that in every town!)

But, hey, this was *hard* work. It wasn't easy for a 10 or 12-year-old to get to all those places—by foot, by bike or by the generosity (financially, too) of indulgent parents & relatives. (Thanks, Mom! Thanks, Dad! Thanks, Grandma!)

Today, it *can* be different. You *may* be reading this magazine because you bought it the old-fashioned way—at a newsstand, drugstore or convenience outlet. Or you may have purchased it at a Waldenbooks or a B. Dalton's, those newer-fashioned bookstore chains which carry magazines and in many cases, comics. But then, a number of you are reading this COMICS SCENE QUARTERLY for a more simple reason: Because you found it at your local comic bookstore. No extensive quests were necessary. The local merchant, specializing in comics, science-fiction & related merchandise, has almost everything you could ever want: Vast selections of comics, graphic novels, role-playing games, posters, Japanese superhero toys and other treasures.

Comics shops are a modern miracle—a one-stop questing place where all your heart's desires can be found (and in your own backyard). These stores rely on direct sales marketing. Simplistically speaking, they buy x number of various publishers' titles from one of the many distributors, getting a greater discount because the merchandise is non-returnable. Traditional newsstand distribution allows for the return of unsold books—a somewhat cumbersome, age-old and costly (to publishers) process. For more info, see our predecessor magazine, COMICS SCENE #7 and "What is Direct Sales?", an article by Peter David that's so comprehensive that it (i.e. doing the interviews for the piece) landed him a direct sales-oriented job with Marvel. Now, Peter David writes comics for Marvel—like *Justice*, a direct sales title.

Here's one thing that concerns me. If you're a COMICS SCENE reader who isn't aware of comic shops, you may be mystified by several subjects explored this issue—like Dark Horse's *ALIENS*, Eternity's *Dinosaurs for Hire*, Comico's *Grendel & Mage*, First's *Badger, Nexus & Crossroads*, and Eclipse's *Total Eclipse*. These comics and many others are distributed primarily—though not necessarily exclusively, some do have limited newsstand distribution—in the direct sales market. In even simpler terms, some of the comics showcased each issue are on sale *only* at your local comic shops.

So, check the phone book under "C" for Comics or "B" for Bookstores. I hope you're lucky enough to have a shop close to home. (If not, mail order comics firms provide great service and a wide selection of titles from all publishers).

All in all, with direct sales and specialty stores, it's no longer so hard to buy comics. Wow, what I would have given to enjoy miracles like these, like comic shops just around the corner, back when I was young.

—David McDonnell/Editor

COMICS SCENE RETURNS in the very near future with that delayed view of something magical: **The Wizard of Id.** The **Johnny Hart—Brant Parker** comic strip is on its way to the movies. Learn why. In salute to the golden anniversary of the Man of Steel, there are further flights with **Superman**. Meanwhile, take an intimate trip behind-the-scenes to discover **Who Framed Roger Rabbit?** Was it director **Robert Zemeckis**? Star **Bob Hoskins**? Or somebody else? Find out when **COMICS SCENE #4 goes on sale July 12, 1988.**

LETTERING

Personal replies are impossible. Other fans & advertisers may contact readers whose letters are printed here. To **avoid** this, mark your letter "Please Withhold My Address." Otherwise, we retain the option to publish your address. Write:
COMICS SCENE
475 Park Avenue South, 8th Floor,
New York, NY 10016

. . . You've got a winner here! The brand-spanking-new COMICS SCENE beats all the other comic fanzines out there by a mile. You have clearly combined the topics of comic books and movies to make a magnificent mag.

I enjoyed each and every article and became excited by the upcoming movies. *The Flintstones* sounds like it will be a riot. I can't wait for the *Batman* movie. If Denny O'Neil is confident in the screenwriter, then so am I. But, please, someone tell Denny to keep Adam West *far* away from this movie. No offense intended, but West doesn't have the right ideas nor does he fit the part for a grim Dark Knight. Both Spider-Man and the Hulk seem like they have a great future ahead of them. It sounds like the *Watchmen* movie will be done right: True to the Alan Moore story.

Then came the cherry for the sundae. The list of comic movies and TV shows. It's too bad *Green Lantern* and the *Silver Surfer* fell through but there are others that sound great. But is the *Thor* "sit-com" for real? Who thought up that dumb idea?

Please, make COMICS SCENE a regular, ongoing, monthly (or bi-monthly) magazine. I enjoyed every page. I want to see more.

Rich Barrett
391 Philadelphia Avenue
Massapequa Park, NY 11762

. . . Remakes and resurrections never seem to live up to past deeds. I was sure this would be the same. I'm glad I was wrong.

Please keep publishing COMICS SCENE. I'm looking forward to it.

Carol Lombard
106 Harbor Boulevard N.
Adventureland Comics
Fullertown, CA 92632

. . . Great mag!! Where has it been all my life? I must say I loved every bit of it. COMICS SCENE has enough variety to satisfy nearly anyone, and it covers just about everything.

I especially like the articles dealing with little known comics and companies I've never heard of. It sort of opens up a whole new world between Marvel's mutants & DC's gadgeteers.

Anyway, don't change a thing and hurry up with the subscription info. I definitely want to see more than this "one-issue revival." Read this to your boss!

Ted Ranisate
RR.1, Box 508
Shevlin, MN 56676

. . . When I saw a copy of the new COMICS SCENE in my local comic shop, my heart leaped. Then, when I saw that, at least for now, it was only a one-shot, I was saddened.

I am partially to blame for the cancellation of the original magazine because I refused to let you know how I felt about your efforts. This time, history will not repeat itself.

Upon finishing the new mag, I have one word to say—*fantastic*! As far as the articles went, my favorites were on John Byrne and Mike Grell. It was good to see coverage on the "alternative press" comics, in the form of the interviews with Kevin Eastman & Peter Laird and Dave Sim.

Scott Fisher
25 Pomeroy Avenue
Wallingford, CT 06492

. . . I am very pleased and delighted to hear that there are sounds of revival at STARLOG PRESS. Around the time when I got serious about comic collecting, COMICS SCENE #1 appeared on the shelves of the local variety store. I followed and enjoyed the many issues that came out. The only issue I have left is #10. I'm not sure if that was the last issue but the magazine disappeared and I had no idea what happened. I am writing on my hands and knees to plead with you to bring back COMICS SCENE. How about Bob Greenberger? Is he too busy at DC? How about making it monthly? How about just making COMICS SCENE a reality again?

Michael Hanley McNamara
Millerton, NY

The original COMICS SCENE *ended with issue #11. And by the way, when we footnote past stories (for easy reader reference) in articles published in this magazine, we'll be referring to the original as CS (for COMICS SCENE). The current magazine, we'll call CSQ (for COMICS SCENE QUARTERLY)—at least until we go from quarterly to a more frequent publication (we hope).*

Photo: Courtesy Mario A. Bruni

FLASH! *Mars Attacks*—but they aren't just bubblegum cards anymore. These invaders are a brand new series of mini-comics available by mail and at select comics stores.

. . . Darn, but it *is* good to see you again! I was doing some eye-wandering at the magazine racks of a local mall, when suddenly, and quite unexpectedly, there it was in all of its four-color glory. The COMICS SCENE logo caught my eye and all of the wonderful memories of the previous 11 issues went through my mind. Paging through the magazine, I saw the same comic magic captured in the earlier issues was here as well. Upon arriving back at my comfortable little abode, I sat back and read the pages cover to cover.

Carr D'Angelo's interview with Christopher Reeve is a fair one, but I must be honest and admit that my opinion is dampened by recent events. My opinion of Reeve, which has recently fallen to an all-time low, has been brought about by his seemingly constant TV interview criticisms of George Reeves—the original TV Superman. Add to this Christopher Reeve's incredibly two-dimensional view of Superman the person (which can be clearly seen in this article) and a rather belligerent attitude about his role as Superman, and you have one disgusting mess. I think that Mr. Reeve needs to get a new perspective on things as they are—or better yet—how about some *new* acting roles? If there are to be any more Superman films, it would be nice to see a real *super man* play the part!

How Patrick Daniel O'Neill and your art staff packed so much great mutant info, tantalizing tidbits and pulse-pounding pictures into a

mere five pages on the X-Men is quite astonishing to say the very least.

Peter Sanderson did a bang-up, or should I say "slash-up" job on a fantastic new import from the land of the rising sun. I believe that the American interest in Japanese comic art, or manga, is still in its infancy. And, if that is indeed the case, I look forward to seeing many more articles on the many gems from across the ocean.

These articles, as well as the many others, including the movie updates and "items on the horizon" pieces make COMICS SCENE into the really wonderful magazine that it is.

Before I finish up with my many praises for your publication, let me give an extra special thank you to Creative Director, W.R. Mohalley, Associate Art Director Maggie Hollands, and the entire Art Staff for making COMICS SCENE into one of the most beautifully illustrated magazines on sale today. The use of color pieces, black and white works, and a great range of picture sizes shows great artistic talent and the touch of one heck of a good art director. A really great job!

Dan Cherney
R.D. #2
2525 Vermilion Road
Amherst, OH 44001

The editorial staff loves what our fantastic art staff have done in designing the magazine. In addition to those you mention, we must cite Associate Art Director Jim McLernon as well as Jef Adin, Blane Robinson and Calvin Lee for their superb work.

. . .More and more people are finally beginning to notice that "comics aren't just for kids anymore," and I think that COMICS SCENE can help the comic industry even more. You have excellent articles, interviews and media coverage (just like STARLOG). I hope that enough people write in to bring this fine publication back to newsstands.

Curtis Tsui
225 Annhurst Drive
Danville, VA 24540

. . .COMICS SCENE #1 is the first of your magazines I have bought, and I *really* liked it. There are so many good things going for it, I really don't know where to start. The main thing is color! That's a big plus! It also has such a professional look and feel. The articles are expertly written and they cover areas in comics I'm very interested in. I just wish they came out more often. It would be fun to be able to expect a book this good every month (two at the most). Keep up the good work and keep your mag comin'.

Clay Musser
6506 NW Grand Boulevard
Oklahoma City, OK 73116

. . .I really like it, especially the *X-Men* and the movie part. I have four questions and suggestions:

1. Have more Marvel.
2. I would like to have subscription information.
3. I would like to see a mutant page on DC or Marvel.
4. Please have more ads.

Well, over all, it was cool, radical, awesome, bad and neat!

Jeremy Howard
2822 Marathon Drive
Henderson, NY 89014

Have more ads? But, Jeremy, editors worldwide like fewer ads so they have more space for articles!

. . .I didn't realize that COMICS SCENE had become such a big book, and indeed such a fine publication devoted to comics. I thoroughly enjoyed reading it. Please give Jim McLernon a pat on the back for the photo he took (issue #1). I've had many photos taken on many occasions, but this was undoubtedly one of the best.

Once again, many, many thanks for your courtesy.

Excelsior!

Stan Lee
Los Angeles, CA

. . .I was very impressed with the array of creators that were interviewed for this issue. It is not often that you will find in one issue interviews with John Byrne, Frank Miller, Alan Moore, Mike Grell and Mike Baron. While I enjoyed these articles, I found them to be a little on the short side, and if revived, I would like to see more in-depth interviews, especially with Baron, and his partner Steve Rude.

I really enjoyed the coverage of all film projects in development and production. I found the "Comic Screen" section to be extremely handy in finding out the status of all the projects that I had heard were coming up. I would especially like to see plenty of coverage of the *Batman* movie, which (thank God) looks very promising.

So, in closing, let me say, put my name in the definite "yes" pile for a new run of COMICS SCENE. It has a definite place among the other magazines.

David Wagenfield
1420 Highgate Road
Kalamazoo, MI 49007

More on Mike Baron? You've got it. See page 45.

. . .I really liked the article about *Watchmen*. That is one movie I would *love* to see made. I don't get any other comic news magazines on a regular basis mostly because they bore me, but I would get yours. Comics and video are a great combination!

Michael Rutkowski
1025 Charlela Lane Apt. 306
Elk Grove, IL 60007

. . .Actually, by the time your new issue of COMICS SCENE had hit the newsstands and comic shops, the *Spirit* movie had already aired. And I don't know what other *Spirit* fans felt or why Will Eisner didn't like it, but I felt it was as good as it could have been under the conditions it was made. Perhaps Eisner is too close to the subject.

Sure, I didn't care for the adventure being in the 1980s, and Eubie White was a big mistake. But don't you feel Michael Shultz, Frank Von Zerneck and Stu Samuels tried to capture the Spirit as he was in the comics? With a bit of clever editing, *The Spirit* could be turned into a closer cinema version.

Joe Thompson
Illustrator
2032 Pratt Street
Philadelphia, PA 19124

. . .There are a couple of comments I would like to make regarding the short piece by William Rabkin and Steve Swires, "Adam West: The Dark Knight Dismayed?" While West may be a very nice man and perhaps even a good actor, though I have never seen any evidence of that, it is my opinion that when it comes to the subject of Batman or more to the point, his portrayal of Batman, he is missing the "batboat." The television series of the late '60s nearly destroyed one of the greatest comic characters in the medium's history. That is not West's fault, but he did play the lead role and, therefore, is the Batman of that era. That era, alas, is gone. Just as Kirk Alyn could not step into Superman's costume today, West could not be taken seriously as Batman in the 1980s. From what I have read about the proposed movie, it is supposed to portray the hero as he was intended to be. It certainly could not be campy. (On that West and I agree.)

However, his contention that there should be some tongue-in-cheek elements strikes me as dangerous to the new movie's ambiance. Also, and this is no fault of West's, he never looked good in tights. I was 14 when the series started. The very first thing I noticed was that this television Batman had ribs that stuck out farther than his chest. This time around, the person who plays Batman should be built like the character. In short, West is just not qualified.

The final point regarding the proposed movie that West made was that without him in the title role, "the movie won't be the commercial success it could be." Again, I must disagree. Were West to be given the role it would certainly attract any number of nostalgic TV series fans. However, he would ultimately have a disastrous effect on total box-office draw. His build, his age, and his (ahem) acting talents are just not suited for the role. It is my hope that West's career takes an upward turn in

Photo: DC Comics Inc.

WANTED: MORE COMICS READERS like Brooke Shields?!?

something that will end his obsession with returning to the screen as Batman.

Don Brigham
8232 Cannon Drive
Wichita, KS

. . .Thank you for coming back to the public eye. It's great to see that the magazine has returned after a four-year absence. (Has it been that long?)

Your article on Chuck Jones (CSQ #2) was exciting. It's also good to see that Daffy Duck is back in time for his 50th anniversary. It's high time that the U.S. got back into doing animation.

Finally, I would like to point out that this is the "Year of the Duck" (with cartoons like *Duck Tales*, *The Duxorcist* Daffy Duck, and now *Count Duckula*). And may the Duck be with you.

Lindy Rosado
3403-14th Avenue #4E
Brooklyn, NY 11218

. . .Great to see #2! Hope it lasts. I have a few issues of your mag from its first run and enjoyed them very much. It was, and is, probably the best magazine of its kind.

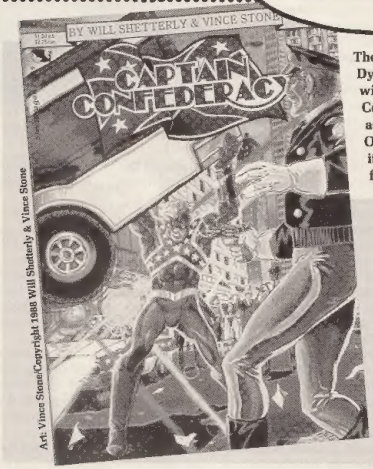
I'm glad you *aren't* going to be a monthly magazine. With what comics cost today, I could hardly afford to pay an extra $3.50 a month. But a quarterly is a different matter.

I am one of those fans who doesn't want to pay a lot for a book just because it is printed on "better" paper. The paper used for the 75¢ titles is just fine. A few of my friends have expressed the same feelings. I wish something could be done about the high cost of comics. I thought that competition was supposed to keep the prices down. That seems to be the case for everything but the publishing business. I hope that you can keep your prices down.

Well, I just want to congratulate you on your return. How about a letters page?

Derrick Fannin
HCR 70 Box 365
Van Tear, KY 41265

COMICS SCENE



Art: Vince Stone/Copyright 1989 Will Shetterly & Vince Stone

The Dixieland Dynamo clashes with the Confederacy as Book One reaches its grand finale.

Way Down in Dixie

The Confederate Army, the C.B.I. and every other right-thinking Southern citizen are sweeping across the countryside, searching for that toothsome turncoat, Captain Confederacy. But not even the friends and fans of the Dixieland Dynamo will be able to find him in his latest issue.

"In #10, *none* of the main cast appears," confesses Will Shetterly, who co-created this alternate world epic with artist Vince Stone. In fact, even Shetterly himself will be absent, letting fellow SF and fantasy author John M. Ford step in with a tale Ford originally intended to write as a short prose piece.

"It's not really a case of my giving up control," notes Shetterly. "It's a case of me having the opportunity to enjoy the thing as a reader. The reason I created *Captain Confederacy* in the first place was because it was something I wanted to read, and since it wasn't out there, I had to write it. John Ford is one of the few people I know who is able to fit himself into other people's universes seamlessly and can find things the creators may not have recognized. So, when John was interested, I said, 'Great!' "

Focusing on one of the creators of the Captain's Ultimate Potential Serum, "the story is about Dr. Brikola trying to escape from the C.S.A," Shetterly explains. "It's told entirely from the point-of-view of someone who picks up Brikola on the way out, and in the course of it, we learn a great deal more about the politics of the South of that world. We get a truck stop late at night and just a few more hints of what regular life is like. I'm really excited about it because it's wonderful stuff. Part of the reason I like having John write it is that I can talk about how neat it is rather than try to be modest."

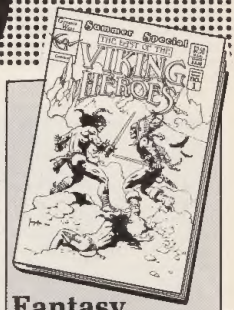
Nevertheless, Shetterly will be taking back the writing reins with the following issue, which he calls "the dramatic conclusion to the main story. It's the State of the Confederacy speech, and we get assassination attempts, tons of action and lots of death. Everything goes public and everything goes to hell.

"Issue #12 is the epilogue. Its primary purpose is to ask, 'What is the meaning of everything that happened in #11? What are the implications for the people who survive and the world?' With #12, the first book of *Captain Confederacy* will be done."

However, that's hardly the series' end. Shetterly already has tentative plans to send the Captain north of the border for a New York-based convention of nationalistic superheroes as well as to send him to other alternate realities.

"There's also the rest of North America to explore, so I would really like to do a story in which two of my main characters take off in a convertible and we do *Route 66* for a couple of issues. The European situation has got to be fascinating, and there hasn't been time to look at that at all. It's a neat world, and as I explore it more and as the readers write in and point out the things I haven't explored yet, it just keeps getting bigger." Says Will Shetterly, "So, maybe we're talking about doing a Dave Sim and planning 300 issues of *Captain Confederacy*."

—Daniel Dickholtz



Art: Frank Frazetta/Courtesy Genesis West

Fantasy Masterpieces

Famed fantasy artist Frank Frazetta returns to comics, hacking and slashing his way across the cover of *The Last of the Viking Heroes Summer Special*. The sword and sorcery comic by former Jack Kirby assistant Michael Thibodeux will also include other works by Frazetta.

Meeting a Deadline

It's easier to write eight pages a week than 22 pages a month, believe it or not!" claims "Deadman" scripter Mike Baron. "I can see the light at the end of the tunnel every time I sit down. When I have to do 22 pages, sometimes I don't see the light for a week or more.

"Most of the Deadman stories here are linked. There's a serial adventure going through and there are even a few cliffhangers, but I want the point of the story to be *right there*. I don't want the reader to finish eight pages and say, 'This guy is just marking time! When is something going to happen?' With 'Deadman', *a lot* happens with each episode."

Originally, the late great acrobat Boston Brand roamed the world, possessing living bodies as he tracked down his one-handed assassin. But once he solved his own murder and the mysterious Rama Kushna charged him with keeping the balance between good and evil, the gregarious ghost found himself somewhat at loose ends in the DC universe.

"This character is almost like a blank slate," he says, explaining Deadman's appeal to his writer's instincts. "There was the fact that I could do *anything* with him, and he wasn't stuck in the vigilante groove. I remember the Neal Adams stories, and they had a quality to them. I'm not trying to follow them. I don't know what made me want to do Deadman, except that eventually, I want him to

Deadman defies dastardly doings and devious deviltry every *Action*-packed week.

Fast Times on the Genetic Front

The Earth is under attack yet again, but this time, the enemy's cause is a good one. In a skirmish-strewn epic raging across 11 annuals, the High Evolutionary is determined to improve humanity's lot, despite the best efforts of the world's greatest heroes.

"He has been to both ends of the evolutionary spectrum, all the way from a single-celled organism to as highly evolved as a human being can attain," explains editor Mark Gruenwald. "What he has learned from this is that the human race has the genetic potential to go farther than many other alien races, such as the Kree or the Skrulls. He can boost humanity's genetic destiny to its potential if he's able to do certain things *right now*. So, if that requires breaking a couple of eggs to make an omelet, that's just what he's going to do."

Helping the High Evolutionary cook up this latest plan are a "whole troop of assistants. He has Eliminators, whose sole purpose is to eliminate environmental factors that are genetic pollutants, such as drugs. If human beings happen to be in the way, too bad. The Purifiers are sterilizing the bad elements in the gene pool, certain of the offshoot races, such as the Mole Man's little henchmen, the Subterraneans, as well as certain individuals who he really doesn't want to propagate their genetic traits. Gatherers get the information he needs, and the Technicians are building this genetic bomb, which—if and when exploded—will cause all of humanity to take that next step towards this grand direction the High Evolutionary has charted.

"In some of the stories, the High Evolutionary comes across as a villain, while in others, he seems like a hero," Gruenwald notes. "The Punisher, for example, says, 'Yeah! Destroy those drug crops! That'll help!' On the other hand, X-Factor comes across the High Evolutionary's men sterilizing the Subterraneans, and they're not for that."

Unlike secret wars of the past, these current conflicts will remain hidden only if the audience chooses not to discover them.

"I believe that the public is tired of having to buy 80,000 books that they don't normally buy just to get *one* complete story. They're tired of having their favorite storyline suddenly disrupted by extraneous plot elements," Gruenwald explains. "People still tend to like crossovers, so we're trying to have the best of both worlds. You can read them in virtually any order—with the exception of the last one, the *Avengers Annual*, which wraps up *all* the loose ends."

But while the rest of Earth's heroes head off to fight the good fight, a new hero will emerge to defend the homefront. Premiering simultaneously in *Amazing Spider-Man Annual* #22 and the first issue of his own title, Speedball, the Masked Marvel, will be introduced to the fine, frenetic art of crimefighting by Tom DeFalco, Roger Stern and Steve Ditko.

"It's hoohah Marvel magic as you like it!" declares DeFalco. "Speedball is a teenager, Robby Baldwin, who has incredible powers and tries to figure out what to do with them. Basically, he becomes a human bouncing ball. Ever take a good rubber ball and then throw it against the wall in a confined space, and it bounces all over the place? Well, that's what Robby does." Admits the co-plotter, "We *are* dealing with a *ridiculous* power."

Art: Ron Frenz/John Romita/Copyright 1988 Marvel Entertainment Group

A stunned Spidey and a dumbstruck Daredevil agree with Tom DeFalco that Speedball is "hoohah Marvel magic as you like it!"

Evolutionary War Art: Sal Buscema/Copyright 1988 Marvel Entertainment Group

The Avengers will end the Evolutionary War, if the High Evolutionary doesn't end them first.

Ridiculous or not, Speedball is going to need every ounce of his accidentally spawned kinetic energy to take on the likes of Leaper Logan and the Sticker in each of the two adventures he'll have every issue. Still, for a hip high school student, having an uncontrollable superpower that can materialize at any moment can be a real drag.

"Before his accident, Robby was a very popular kid in school. He was a joiner, he played sports, he hung around with the girls, he was a member of the in-crowd. Now, he has to withdraw because he's afraid of the transformations, what they can do to himself and his friends," notes DeFalco. "Because Steve Ditko is involved, people are trying to see the Spider-Man connections, the relationships between Robby Baldwin and Peter Parker. There really aren't any. There's probably more of one between Robby and Flash Thompson.

"For the last few years, comic books have gotten awfully depressing, and we here at Marvel are actively trying to reverse that trend. In our mainline books, you'll see a new feeling of optimism and excitement. *Speedball* grew out of that. It's something that's very different from what's out there, though very much in the spirit of what makes Marvel comics work."

However, that doesn't mean that Speedball will immediately be an active participant in the Marvel universe. "At this stage, we have absolutely no plans to have him appear with any other characters," stresses Tom DeFalco. "I assume eventually he'll be fighting Dr. Doom and Magneto and the other clowns, but for the time being, he's going to be—dare I say it?—a friendly neighborhood superhero."

—*Daniel Dickholtz*

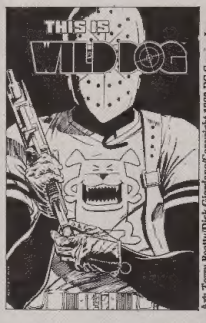
get into some serious horror. We've been talking about a Deadman graphic novel for sometime next year, and the tone would be drastically different from that of the weekly. Deadman lends himself to horror, and that's the direction I'm going to be exploring."

The 12-part Deadman serial running in *Action* however, is building up to different kinds of supernatural thrills, Mike Baron explains. "Deadman ends up in hell, but he doesn't really belong there. He's not an evil soul, but because he's dead, he can travel between Earth and hell with impunity, and can converse with Satan. He also inadvertently provides the means for Satan to walk on Earth, but this isn't *The Omen II*—it's *funny*. It's dangerous, but it's funny!"

—*Kim Howard Johnson*

Deadman Art: Andy & Adam Kubert/Copyright 1988 DC Comics Inc.

He's No Man's Best Friend



Art: Terry Beatty/Dick Giordano/Copyright 1988 DC Comics Inc.

"Wild Dog is a modern extension of the kind of costumed hero represented by the Green Hornet, the Shadow and before that, Zorro and the Scarlet Pimpernel," says writer Max Allan Collins, who co-created the character with artist Terry Beatty. For the first regularly scheduled "Wild Dog" story in *Action Comics Weekly*, they've created a comic-book version of the pro-censorship, self-appointed watchdog groups who have made news recently.

"We've taken them one logical, absurd step further—from book-burning to blowing up bookstores," Collins explains. "The group is called the Legion of Morality, and it is blowing up comic book shops, hijacking trucks delivering *Cosmopolitan* and *Penthouse*, any publication a censorship group might consider bad for the rest of us to look at. It's a terrorist group devoted to looking after what they think are society's interests where morality is concerned. Of course, I have my own vigilante who takes his own approach to the problem, wielding his own 'red pencil.' "

—*Patrick Daniel O'Neill*

Justice Art: Lee Weeks/Copyright 1988 Marvel Entertainment Group

Those who dare to remain in New York will find there's a new marshal in town when they meet Justice.

News Universe

It used to be that one could turn on the evening news and just have to listen to the latest political scandals, hostage situations and religious upheavals. But, that was before Pittsburgh blew up. That's when the world really stopped looking like that old familiar place outside the window, and more like a whole New Universe.

Take the international scene. *The War* will break out early this summer, and Mark Gruenwald confesses, "will be co-plotted by Doug Murray, who is doing *The 'Nam*, and myself. It's going to involve most of the characters I introduced in *The Draft* and probably half-a-dozen new ones. It will be the story of the U.S. Army's first paranormal strike force on their first overseas mission, and how that leads to extremely dire consequences for the world."

Meanwhile, stateside, the notorious Justice will begin to face the dire consequences of his own actions. "Justice is a moral and emotional powderkeg, and that powderkeg is going to be on a very short fuse over the next few months," reports Peter David, who chronicles the vindictive vigilante's adventures with the aid of artist Lee Weeks. "He has emotionally separated himself from the horror of what he's been doing by coming up with this whole divine mission rationale. By introducing his daughter into the series, she re-establishes his touchbase with humanity, and in so doing, opens up an incredible can of worms as Justice slowly starts to realize what he has been doing. He's then going to try and swing in the other direction and temper justice with mercy, except he's going to run into serious trouble.

"In the meantime, there will be some incredible injury to one of the supporting characters that will get Angela so upset that she wants her father to go out and get the guys who did it, which is going to confuse Justice to no end. He'll continue to go on missions for the National Security Council, but the difficulty is that as he does more and more of these missions, he's going to get flakier and flakier. Justice is very much in danger of cracking up completely, and if he does, imagine if you will, an atomic bomb going, 'Whoopsie! Where shall I go off now?'

"Also, we're going to introduce some of the most sick paranormals in the New Universe," says David, noting in particular one Creeping Crud, "who is basically a paranormal leper. Stuff is constantly falling off of him, but it keeps regrowing. If he touches anyone, they fall apart inside of a minute-and-a-half."

The northeastern part of the country will continue to feel the brunt of the Pitt's environmental impact, as its enormous output of volcanic ash clogs the lungs as well as the skies, dramatically lowering temperatures, and the hole torn in the ozone layer lets in more harmful radiation. In fact, says Gruenwald, "By the summer, New York is going to become quite uninhabitable. People are going to be moving out. It will become a haven for paranormals, though, who will have to wear their protective skin cancer-proof stuff.

"The current plan," concocted by Gruenwald and artist Paul Ryan, "is for D.P. 7 to help paranormals make it to sanctuary in New York" in the pages of their own series. Unbeknownst to that group of heroes, however, "Justice is going to be leaving the N.S.C. and set himself up as the adjudicator of New York City, the marshal who's going to walk into town trying to keep a lid on things," says David. "That's long-term, though."

Agrees Mark Gruenwald, "It's a great plan. We may change it later, but that's the goal we're more or less heading toward."

—*Daniel Dickholtz*

Nightwing Over Europe

One of the first rotations into DC's remodeled *Action Comics Weekly* is a six-installment, eight-page Nightwing serial. Written by longtime *Teen Titans* scribe Marv Wolfman and pencilled by former *Justice League* artist Chuck Patton, Dick Grayson will once again venture into the world without his fellow Titans.

"The attitude DC has on the weekly is a grim one. I don't mean that in a negative way! They're looking for heavier stories, so something like a typical Changeling story wouldn't work," says Wolfman.

Therefore, Nightwing is currently the most appropriate character to use from the Titans. "DC wanted to do 'Nightwing,' and they asked me to do it. If I didn't do it, someone else would have. I don't like anyone else touching the characters, only because other writers cannot really relate their stories to what I want in the regular book. The *Teen Titans Spotlight* stories didn't have the same emotional content or cohesiveness that I put into the regular book. There were some good stories in *Spotlight*, but they didn't tie in very well with *Titans*."

With the new weekly format, Wolfman also feels he is able to write denser stories. "Each chapter is more dense than if the story was done in one book. The format is more conducive to plot turns and twists. Readers should be able to understand what's going on without a recap. They can pick it up through dialogue; that's the way I did *Night Force*. I think new readers understood what was going on in that book, and that was a fairly complex comic."

In the first rotation of Nightwing's feature, former Titan Speedy goes to New York to enlist Dick Grayson's aid. The mother of Speedy's child, Cheshire, has been assigned to kill some very special ambassadors. This entire project must be kept secret, and Nightwing and Speedy head off for Europe to protect the ambassadors. "The problem is that Nightwing has not been told the truth," adds Marv Wolfman. "Let me also say that this story corrects the situation on how Batman and Nightwing split."

—*Hank Kanalz*

Art: Jerry Bingham

BATMAN
TAKE ONE

Even as he masterminds the Joker's perfidious plot, screenwriter Sam Hamm is ripping the cowl off the Caped Crusader.

By CARR D'ANGELO

Comic book fans are a suspicious and skeptical lot. After years of rumors of a big-budget Batman feature film, most are reluctant to believe that the Batman movie is closer to production than ever before.

As announced last issue, Batman will be directed by animation veteran Tim (Pee-wee's Big Adventure) Burton from a script by Sam Hamm, who previously shared screenwriting credit on the Arctic drama Never Cry Wolf. Hamm didn't go to film school—"Film school is death," he says—but he always wanted to write. When a spec script of his called Pulitzer Prize became the object of a studio bidding war, Hamm earned some time, some money and a two-year term deal at Warner Bros.

While at Warner Bros., Hamm—who claims, "I read comics obsessively when I was a kid"—noticed that little was happening with the Batman project. Tim Burton had been set to direct, but there was no script. Both an early draft by 007 and Superman screenwriter Tom Mankiewicz (loosely based on the late '70s Steve Englehart/Marshall Rogers issues of Detective

Art: Brian Bolland

"The Joker, even more than Bruce Wayne, has to be a male sexpot, a guy with this really commanding presence," explains screenwriter Sam Hamm.

Art: Frank Miller/Klaus Janson/Lynn Varley

Hamm's script contains strong imagery from the Dark Knight's recent adventures. "Swipe from the best sources," says the screenwriter.

Saturday Night Live alumni *Bill Murray and Eddie Murphy as Batman and Robin, respectively. Fortunately for comics fans, Burton and Hamm finally met through their mutual friend, Warner Bros. v.p. Bonni Lee. Hamm calls working with Burton "the greatest collaboration I've ever had with just about anybody," and is confident that if anyone can translate his* Batman *to the screen, it's Tim Burton. "He has a great eye for that weird, shadowy, gothic look," Hamm notes.*

If the camera starts rolling this fall, Batman *may get to movie theaters in time to celebrate the Darknight Detective's 50th anniversary. And if it's a hit? Well, Sam Hamm feels he has already set the stage for* Batman II *and its logical villain . . . but since the baddie in question hates to be double-crossed, Hamm's not talking sequel just yet.*

COMICS SCENE: The appeal of Superman, who has already been in four feature films, is that he's the biggest, he's the strongest and he can fly. What do you think makes Batman a classic character?

SAM HAMM: Batman's the *sickest*. The character's appeal is that he's a millionaire, a rich guy who could have anything he wants, and the only thing that seems to satisfy him is to dress up as a bat, go out and kick ass. Why? That's the central question of *Batman*.

A comic book is different from a movie. In a comic book, Batman co-exists with Superman and Aquaman. He's just another "-man." In a movie, you don't have to recognize the DC universe or that this guy exists in a tradition and other guys are doing the same thing—some of whom are mutants, aliens or regular joes—all of them existing in this big, loose consortium of do-gooders.

We wanted to do a movie where the idea of being a vigilante superhero is a *radical* idea. Once you try to ground the character in the real world, the plot basically generates itself. If you're given the premise that there's a millionaire who dresses up and fights crime, you have to explain it—and that backpedalling becomes the plot. How does it affect his life?

I hope this movie is not perceived as a comedy because it's fairly dark and violent, but the essential premise of *Batman* is a comedic one. It's about a guy who has a bizarre hobby that totally screws up his life. We've set the story in the first six weeks of Batman's career. You catch the guy at an early enough point where he's still feeling the effects of this insane decision he has made.

To my mind, this movie is really about what happens when Batman, who has made this insane decision, starts to go *sane*. Suddenly, he finds himself in a situation where he's falling in love with a woman [Vicki Vale]—but that means that all this insane stuff he's doing with the

Art: Bob Kane/Copyright 1980 Detective Comics Inc./Renewed by National Periodical Publications

Comics) *as well as a treatment Burton developed with writer Julie Hickson, had been put aside.*

Hickson's treatment presented Gotham as a futuristic city akin to Fritz Lang's Metropolis *and concentrated heavily on the Joker's absurdist antics, including painting all the windows of Gotham's skyscrapers black, turning a giant Christmas tree into a rocket and even making a guest appearance on TV's* The Love Boat. *The treatment's most inspired twist is in its origin sequence when the Joker guns down young Bruce Wayne's parents from the driver's seat of a Mr. Softee truck.*

Apparently, this version of Batman *was too far out, and probably too expensive, for the studio. While the project cooled, one executive held the opinion that the only way to make a Batman movie work was to cast*

Unlike earlier scripts, the Hamm version won't devote too much screen time to the Caped Crusader's "boring genesis."

cape and the mask is going to make his life totally impracticable.

We're almost deconstructing the idea of being a superhero from the ground up. *Everything* in the movie is designed to subvert the possibility of a superhero. That's one reason why everybody in the script finds out who he is. There's no major character who doesn't find out by the movie's end that Batman is Bruce Wayne.

The scene I really like is where he gets cornered by four thugs in an alley. And the big moment, which is always the moment of horror in comic books, is when they yank off his mask –but nobody knows who the hell he is. How would they? It's just some guy

The pleasure for me as a comic-book fan was to take those typical comic-book situations and tweak them, to throw each one into more of a real world environment and see how it would play itself out.

CS: When you accepted the assignment to write *Batman*, were there any restrictions and instructions from DC or Warner Bros.?

HAMM: Starting out, we basically got the prescription from the studio: Have the Joker, have Robin, and Mark Canton [Warner Bros. president in charge of production] said, "Make it *real*." That sounds like a meaningless comment, but it made sense in a way that we couldn't even perceive at the time. I feel that gave us a license to treat the material seriously as opposed to trying to get the yocks out of it.

By the time we were getting input and comments from DC, we found out that they wanted to go in the same area in which we were already headed. Halfway through the draft, [Batman creator] Bob Kane actually sent along a little set of prescriptions for what the movie should be like. It was a pleasure to get because it was almost point for point what we were already doing.

CS: Did you do extensive research into Batman comics? There are a few elements in your script that seem influenced by Frank Miller's *Dark Knight*. For example, you use Miller's explanation for Batman's emblem: He wears a target on his chest because his head is unprotected.

HAMM: Swipe from the best sources, that's right! Took a couple of lines from *Dark Knight*. Also took a couple lines from Alan Moore's *The Killing Joke*.

I met Alan Moore when I was over in England last spring. Moore was a great guy, he was extraordinarily gracious. Being a gentleman, he inquired very discreetly, "Have you had a chance to look at my script for *The Killing Joke*?" And I said, "Well, yes, I have, in fact." He never mentioned it but, of course, there are about three lines that are stolen outright from *The Killing Joke*. I was happy to confirm his suspicions.

CS: Here's a two-part essay question: There have been many failed comic-book adaptations—the *Spider-Man* TV show, the *Spirit* TV movie, *Superman III* and *IV*, just to name a few. Why do you think these things rarely capture the charm of the original source material? And why will *Batman* be better?

HAMM: This is going to be a muddy answer. It's a matter of not sitting down and trying to figure out what will play in a comic versus what will play in a movie. The thing that always seems a cop-out and afflicts all of the *Superman* movies is that whenever there's a key dramatic moment where you either take it seriously or you go cute, the impulse is to go cute.

What was amazing to me about *Batman* when I turned in the script was that everybody thought it was a radical approach. I thought I was just doing the story straight. I felt it was just like that original Batman story in 1939 which starts out with Bruce Wayne sitting around talking with the Commissioner. Then, there's this mysterious Batman who goes off on his exploits. And the shock at the story's end is that it turns out to be Bruce Wayne.

The obvious problem with the *Batman* project is that [the studio] tried to do it like *Superman*. The Tom Mankiewicz script is beat for beat the same structure. But it's not the same story as *Superman* at all. It

Art: Brian Bolland

"Batman's whole gimmick, the only reason to wear the bat costume, is to *frighten* people," says Hamm.

Art: Brian Bolland

"This movie is really about what happens when Batman, who has made this insane decision, starts to go sane," reveals Hamm.

Art: Brian Bolland
Lotta/Something Wild Photo: Don Smetzer/Copyright Jack Orion Pictures Corp
Dafoe/Streets of Fire Photo: Copyright 1984 Universal City Studios

Although an unknown will be considered as Batman, Jack Nicholson (far right) has been mentioned in connection with the Joker. Hamm's personal picks for the role are Ray (*Something Wild*) Liotta (left) or Willem (*Platoon*) Dafoe (center).

doesn't have the same kind of opening with flashy stuff like a planet blowing up. It doesn't have something you have to explain like why he can fly.

The twin agendas that I thought were right to work with were: 1) Determine what is the kind of story structure that will make Batman sufficiently menacing. He's a frightening character. His whole gimmick, the only reason to wear the bat costume, is to frighten people. And 2) Do what that initial Batman story did and take Batman as a *fait accompli*. In other words, if you start with Batman and work backwards to Bruce Wayne, then you have a structure that allows you to see this character's impact on the rest of the people in the story. You don't have to waste half-an-hour getting him into the costume.

Nothing could be more boring in my mind than to see this kid weep at the graveside and decide, "I will dedicate myself to fighting crime," and then the kid sews this suit. The real horror of a superhero is getting people into suits. If there's any way you can avoid the moment where the guy decides, "Well, I think I'll put on a suit," it's best to do it. The script's only real innovation as far as I was concerned was to start the story outside the point he's Batman and viewing him in a very splintered viewpoint among several characters, dealing with Batman as an external phenomenon and *not* watch his boring genesis.

CS: You're saying what's most interesting about Bruce Wayne is that he did this crazy thing at all, not why or how he did it.

HAMM: Exactly. *Nobody* cares how long he had to work out at the parallel bars and all that stuff. I mean, what do you do? A montage? Now he's in karate school, now he's on the parallel bars . . .

CS: Criminology classes . . .

HAMM: Yeah, it's like, "Get to it." People are paying their six bucks to see the guy in the suit kick some bad guys. It's a waste of time. You can get going with the plot much quicker if you take that stuff for granted. If you're paying to see Batman, then you want to see Batman.

CS: How did you approach the balance between Batman and Bruce Wayne? Do you agree with *Batman* editor Denny O'Neil [CSQ #1] that Bruce is the disguise and Batman the true persona?

HAMM: What Denny O'Neil says is absolutely right, and that's the point at which the movie starts. Batman has been running the show. The preparations, the things that will blossom into Batman, have been the dominant side for almost 25 years. Once the story gets underway, the big problem is that Bruce Wayne starts encroaching, begins reasserting himself. Also, the two halves start finding out in the process of being Batman that it isn't really as practicable as they thought it would be. No matter how prepared you are in every situation, how much of a machine you are, shit's gonna crop up which makes it dangerous and confusing and frightening and unsatisfying.

CS: Batman never expected there to be a Joker.

HAMM: Exactly! That's another thing we're able to do because it's an isolated two-hour movie. We can introduce something like the Joker and it's extraordinary. In a comic book, when you introduce the Joker, he's the villain of the month. I want to keep a sense throughout the movie that what's happening is extraordinary. It's not like people ever become accustomed to the sight of Batman or the Joker. The gag I kept making at pitch meetings was, "You don't want it to be, 'Oh, there's the milkman, there's the mailman, there's the Batman.' " You *always* want people's jaws to drop when they see this guy who looks like a bat.

CS: Do you feel the *Batman* TV show of the '60s is an obstacle to the new movie? Adam West still says he wants to play Batman, that people won't accept the movie without him.

HAMM: I don't know how to address it because our agenda from the beginning was, "*Don't* do the TV show." It's a situation where I feel like a cameo part for Adam West would be fine. To involve him in a larger way, it just ends up being kind of coy and self-referential. You start reminding people they're seeing a movie and, "Here's your old buddy from the TV show."

The thing with West is *not* a situation like Mr. Spock, which is a part that's so closely identified with a particular actor that the pleasure you take from the character is generated specifically by that guy's performance. Batman is a character that predates Adam West by more than 25 years.

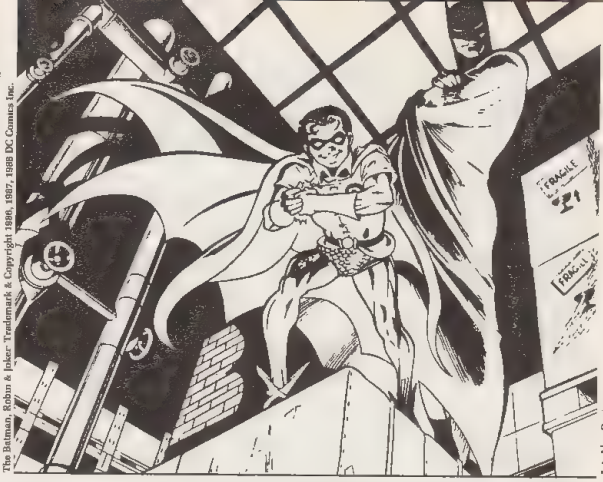
CS: You've said the thinking is to cast an unknown as Batman with a more recognizable star as the Joker. Names that come to mind are David Bowie, James Woods, Tim Curry . . . and everyone mentions Jack Nicholson. But isn't the Joker in your script a younger guy?

HAMM: I understand they do want to show it to Nicholson. Nicholson circa 1970, you couldn't do better. But the way the plot is set up, the Joker should be Batman's age to emphasize that doppelganger stuff as much as possible. My picks would be Willem [*Platoon*] Dafoe or Ray [*Something Wild*] Liotta. When I saw *Something Wild*, I thought, "There he is."

CS: Without his makeup, the Joker would look like Bruce Wayne.

HAMM: *That's* the thing. He has to be like

Bill Murray and Eddie Murphy as the Dynamic Duo? Don't laugh. This plot was considered by minds almost as twisted as the Joker's—studio execs.



The Batman, Robin & Joker: Trademark & Copyright 1986, 1987, 1988 DC Comics Inc.
Art: Alan Davis

a dangerous Bruce Wayne. Bruce Wayne is the aristocratic half and this guy is the maniacal half. The Joker, even more than Bruce Wayne, has to be a male sexpot, a guy with this really commanding presence. Since the Joker's whole hook is that once he's disfigured, he redefines his notion of beauty—"Beauty is now what I am"—he has to be a guy who is vain and egotistical enough to pull that off even after he has been hideously transformed.

CS: Well, if you have any doubts about Batman's insanity, his existence is entirely justified once the Joker shows up.

HAMM: That's the angle we emphasize very early on. There's even a newspaper headline, "War of the Freaks." These two guys are each in their own way terrorizing the city. The Joker's terrorizing the straight element, and Batman's terrorizing the criminal element. And when they finally

Those Are Fighting Words

Most people would kill to chalk up the frequent flyer miles that director Tim Burton is racking up in the name of *Batman: The Movie*.

Burton, fresh off his directing stint on *Beetlejuice*, has been shuttling between Los Angeles and London scouting out locations for the estimated $20 million major motion picture treatment of the Caped Crusader. According to a Warner Bros. spokesman, the pivotal roles of Batman, Robin and the Joker have, at presstime, still not been cast. However, *Batman* as reported last issue, is still supposed to go before the cameras in September, although the studio has *not* yet officially greenlighted the film.

Burton, who has been storyboarding the movie in his spare time, offers that the Sam Hamm script is a joy to behold.

"Sam has really gone into detail on the story," enthuses Burton. "A perfect example of that is how he has created the more action-oriented scenes in the script. Most writers would just say that Batman and the Joker get into a fight and that would be it. But Sam has choreographed each punch and movement. He's as excited about doing a Batman movie as I am and it shows."

Yet while Burton admits that *Batman: The Movie* will be an action event, he warns that anyone also looking for a major special FX show may be disappointed.

"There *will* be FX, but they'll be more natural and physical than bizarre. You may see Batman swinging out over Gotham City on his bat rope, but you *won't* see anything disgusting exploding out of anybody's stomach," he laughs.

Burton, who got his feet wet in the business through an animation stint at the Disney Studios, recently returned to the comic art form when he teamed up with writer Michael McDowell for a comic-book story for the second volume of the fledgling horror anthology *Taboo* (also CSQ #2). Their collaboration, "Oyster Boy," is a tongue-in-cheek tale of a human family whose mania for seafood results in their oyster-looking offspring. It's an amusing, though ultimately disturbing effort that offered Burton an opportunity to return to much simpler times.

"Doing 'Oyster Boy' was fun because it allowed me to get back into a less pressure-packed situation for a while,' explains Burton. "I liked the evil kind of irony in Michael's story. It really blew me away. The idea of drawing something simple was also nice. There were no delusions of huge amounts of money and somebody's career being on the line. It was all very refreshing and something I would hope I would have more time to do in the future.

For the moment, though, Burton's future is *Batman*, a future with sequels he says he *would* be inclined to do.

"But I think that's jumping the gun. It has taken almost eight years to get the first one going Get back to me around Christmas 1989 and we'll talk sequels."

–Marc Shapiro

Beetlejuice Photo Copyright 1987 The Geffen Film Company

It's *Beetlejuice* (Michael Keaton) the Boy Wonder, director Tim Burton's latest batty screen effort.

Oyster Boy Art: Tim Burton/Copyright 1988 Michael McDowell & Tim Burton
Art Courtesy Steve Rissello/Taboo

Everyone wondered, and no one could tell, when would Oyster Boy come out of his shell?

Art: David Mazzucchelli

get together to duke it out, they're on a different plane, totally removed from what everybody else in the city is involved in.

We got a little input from the studio—clarify what the community's opinion of Batman is. The community, at the beginning, should not know about Batman. Batman should be something nobody knows what the hell it is. He just appears out of nowhere and is a supernatural figure terrorizing the underworld. That's what his gimmick is and the only reason he ever comes above ground is because the menace of the Joker is so extraordinary.

CS: If anything, Batman would be reported in the news like a skid row killer. Like, "Police claim an unidentified man is apprehending street criminals"—if the police would even admit it to the press.

HAMM: A large part of Batman's effectiveness would obviously be based on not believing he exists, not knowing what his agenda is. In the script, whenever anyone sees Batman, their first impulse is to shoot him. That's why I was so eager to appropriate Miller's line about the target on his chest

Batman also wears a cape, which is stupid. A guy who goes swinging around on ropes and getting into fights does not want to wear a cape. So, I wanted a scene where the fact that he wears a cape screws him up horribly. I wrote this extraordinarily baroque scene.

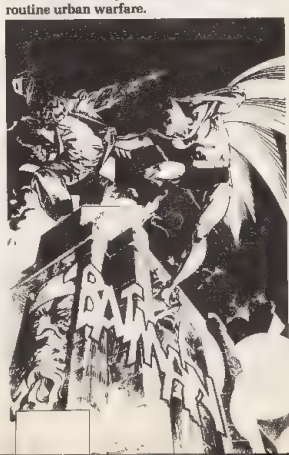
It was a scene where Batman, in the movie's finale, pursues the Joker down into a subway. All the power has been cut and Batman just about gets him pinned because the Joker runs into a stalled subway train. Suddenly, the power comes back on. The Joker is close enough that he's able to climb on to the front of the train. But where Batman has been pursuing the Joker, now the Joker is hanging on the prow of this subway train and bearing down on Batman who has no place to go. Batman ends up ducking into this little alcove and backing up against the wall, but his cape billows out and snags on the side of the subway car. He's yanked out and is dragged for this quarter of a mile ride where he's banging into the walls and is totally beat up. His leg is broken, he's staggering by the time it stops. We cut that.

CS: When I interviewed Denny O'Neil, he said, "If Sam Hamm ever wants to write Batman comic books, he should give me a call." How did you feel about that offer?

HAMM: I was flattered out of my mind, to tell you the truth. In fact, my ambition when I was a kid was to write and draw comic books. I still have to edit myself because I tend to put an exclamation point after every line of dialogue. The thing that I'm ambivalent about in comic-book writing is the device of the thought balloon because the entire training of dramatic writing and screenwriting is to figure out alternate methods [of showing a character's thought process].

But I think it would be great fun. Actually, tell Denny I would really love to *draw* Batman. Except I'm considerably less talented—and somewhat slower—than Brian Bolland. ■

The "War of the Freaks" between the Joker and Batman is something that Hamm won't allow Gotham City's citizens to accept as routine urban warfare.



Art: Walt Simonson

By PATRICK DANIEL O'NEILL

Is it all over for Earth's Mightiest Heroes? Has "X-Factor" artist Walt Simonson done what no supervillain ever could?

Disassemble!?!

All Avengers Art, John Buscema/Tom Palmer

"In *Thor*, I was able to create the illusion of a lot of stuff going on around the edges. That's the kind of storytelling I like to do, and I think I can bring that to *The Avengers*," Walt Simonson predicts.

Simonson, who won critical acclaim for his stint as writer/artist on the adventures of Marvel's thunder god (his first regular assignment as a writer), has picked up the scripting reins on another of Marvel's oldest titles, *The Avengers*. His term on the series is open-ended. "No commitment in terms of time was asked when I took it over, and none given," he notes. "I expect to do it for as long as I find it interesting and my editor agrees. Those are the usual terms for writers in comics."

Executive editor Mark Gruenwald asked Simonson if he would be interested in writing the team's adventures and, although Simonson had worked with Gruenwald on *Thor*, the writer/artist had to give *Avengers* some thought. "I decided to take it on for some of the same reasons I took on *Thor*," Simonson recalls.

"When I was a comics reader, back in the middle '60s, there was a period where I was a big fan of *The Avengers*. I don't think it lasted as long as my interest in *Thor*, but I enjoyed the work that John Buscema was doing back when Roy Thomas was writing it. John is pencilling the book again, with Tom Palmer inking it, so I thought, 'Well, hey, it might be a gas to do *The Avengers* and work with these two guys—and, hell, it's a chance to do Thor again!' "

So, what is Simonson planning to do with "Earth's Mightiest Heroes?" He plans nothing less than to tear the team apart and put it back together again, in an attempt to create a membership more to his own tastes.

Art: John Buscema/Tom Palmer

The party was over as soon as Simonson assumed writing chores on *The Avengers*, and started playing their funeral march.

"On *The Avengers*, I'm personally not as interested in some of the current members as I am in some of the past members," Simonson says. "That isn't to say I'm going to bring back 'the old guys.' I would like to remake the team using some of the old guard and some new characters. It's more interesting to me as a writer, and it opens up more possibilities for exploring the people who are already in the group."

Who is likely to go, who is likely to stay, and who is likely to be joining? Simonson is cagey when talking about prospective new members, but he is willing to discuss the prospects for at least two of the current members.

Dark days loom ahead for (clockwise) the Black Knight, Sub-Mariner, She-Hulk, Captain Marvel, Dr. Druid, Marrina and Thor.

"I'm just *not* a major Doctor Druid fan," he laughs. "With all due respect to everybody who has ever written Doctor Druid, he's just not my cup of tea. On the other hand, ironically, as I'm writing toward the goal of breaking the pieces apart and putting them back together, I find myself getting more interested in Druid, partly because I have had to come to grips with him as a character. In my own mind, I've quantified what it is he can do. Implicit in the stuff I'm doing—I

didn't sit down and write a rule book—is that he has control of the several categories of extrasensory powers. It mainly involves clairvoyance [being able to "see" things at a distance], precognition [being able to see the future], postcognition [viewing things in the past], and telepathy. That gives me the parameters of the character around which I can write.

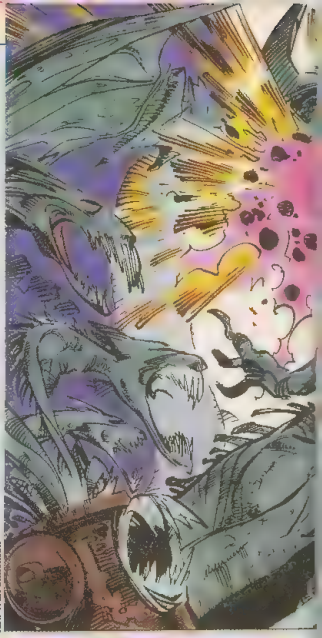
"I would like to use a mix of characters who are only appearing in *Avengers* and characters who have their own books. The Avengers for me, as a definition, have always been 'the most powerful heroes in the Marvel Universe,'" Simonson explains. "That's the way they started out--Hulk, Thor, Iron Man. The Wasp and Ant-Man may not quite fit that role, but the Avengers were basically the big guns. As a team, even after the first shake-up—when they consisted of Cap, Hawkeye, Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch, who weren't quite as powerful—they still had a cache as a power group. That's different from Fantastic Four, who are essentially a family. The Avengers are united by a common vision of how things ought to be."

Simonson's line-up, when completely assembled, will consist of such longtime Avengers as Thor, some other established characters from the Marvel Universe, and one or two new characters "who are powerful in their own ways. That's the vision I'm working toward as a team—a bunch of really number one guys, whether they're number one by force of arms or force of personality. I would like to mix those together.

Writing & Drawing "X-Factor"

Married couples who are both comics creators are not unknown. Bill and Dorothy Woolfolk were both writers and editors for Fawcett and DC in the 1940s and '50s. Today, Roy and Dann Thomas write together, as do John Ostrander and his wife, Kim Yale (CSQ #2). But Walter and Louise Simonson are a rarity—a writer-artist team who are teamed in life as well.

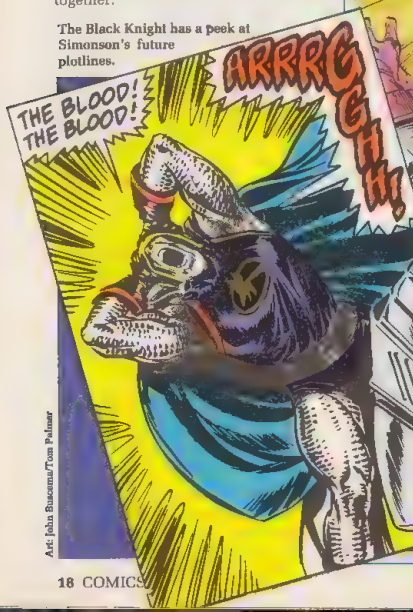
Though Walt Simonson has received acclaim for his writing skills on *Thor* and is gaining more for *The Avengers*, he hasn't given up the drawing board. Every month, he pencils the adventures of the original X-Men, now known by the title of their own book, *X-Factor*. Since *X-Factor* is scripted by Simonson's wife, affectionately known as "Weezie," it provides a working relationship Simonson says is a breeze. "It's probably easier working with Weezie than with anybody else," he admits. "For one thing, the access is simpler. If I have any questions, any problems, I want to bounce some ideas around, it's pretty easy to walk



Art: Walt Simonson

The High Evolutionary's plan for a better human race meets with strong resistance from X-Factor's nemesis, Apocalypse.

The Black Knight has a peek at Simonson's future plotlines.



Art: John Buscema/Tom Palmer

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The Avengers aren't going to be the only ones experiencing hell on Earth. X-Factor will have their hands full in the forthcoming "Inferno" storyline.

upstairs and talk to her—as opposed to calling somebody on the phone. In our particular case, it works well because I think we each have different strong points that are complementary. Weezie is stronger on character than I am; I tend to gloss over character, the things that make people tick. On the other hand, that interests her a great deal. At the same time, I'm more visually oriented, and will be inclined to punch up a scene in a way she might not have imagined."

The character-oriented bent of her mind is clear in the plotlines she has planned for the upcoming issues of *X-Factor*.

"In the June issue, we reach the deadline for mutants to sign up under the Mutant Registration Act," she reveals. "X-Factor and the kids in their charge have to decide whether they're going to register or not. That will set up the *Genetics* mini-series, as Rusty [the pyrokinetic who was found early in the regular series] decides he will not sign up, but will go public at the same time as a protest. He gets taken off to a Naval brig to be court-martialled for desertion."

A new set of villains make themselves known in the July through September issues, as Weezie prepares to tie up some long-dangling plot threads. "The Orphanmaker and Nanny lead the Lost Boys . . . and Girls. 'Girls' is sort of in parentheses there," she giggles. "The Orphanmaker is a crazed version of Peter Pan: He goes around kidnapping children and killing their parents. This may—or may not—be what happened to Jean Grey's sister Sara and her two children. The Orphanmaker is so nuts that the Marauders [of "Mutant Massacre" fame] rejected him as a member. He is kept in a cold-sleep coffin and awakened when needed. Nanny is his robot. She looks sort of like Humpty Dumpty, and she's the one who wakes him up and puts him back to sleep. The Lost Boys (and Girls) are a group of reject mutant children, the monsters nobody wanted. All this will tie in with the taking of Scott Summers' baby and lead into the 'Inferno' storyline."

"I picked up *X-Factor* because Weezie was writing it, not because she's my wife," her husband comments. "One of my goals over the years has been to work with the people I thought were real good writers, and with no axe to grind, I think my wife is one of the best writers in comics. No thanks to me, she did it all on her own. We had never worked together before, freelancer to freelancer. I had worked for her when she was an editor, but never on the same project on an equal footing. The fact that *X-Factor* sells a lot of copies doesn't hurt.

"I'm *only* in comics for the money," he laughs. "Make sure the sarcasm comes through in that, or somebody will think I've sold my soul to the devil."

—*Patrick Daniel O'Neill*

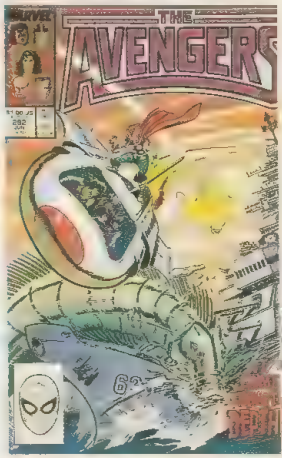
"Originally, I thought I would write the She-Hulk out of the book," Simonson points out. "But as I've been writing her, she has become more interesting. I planned to write her out because I'm keeping Thor. In terms of power, She-Hulk can't do anything that Thor can't. She's a lawyer, she can draw up a brief or sue people effectively. But basically, she's just very strong; so is Thor, and he can do a lot of other stuff besides.

"However, I've discovered that She-Hulk is really hilarious to write. There are all these characters walking around in the Avengers—really powerful, but pompous, straight-laced sorts—but she's much more easy-going. She punctures many of the pretensions, which is very refreshing. She-Hulk is going to make the grade by dint of personality, which I wouldn't have expected when I took over the book. I thought she'd be one of the casualties, and she surprised me."

As Simonson builds toward the book's 300th issue, he will break up the current team, eventually having an issue, #297, in which there are *no* Avengers. Did that create any plotting problems? "No," he laughs. "To plot an issue without the Avengers, I just said, 'Here, John, you've got 22 pages. Give me a day in the life of the city. Don't show *any* superheroes.' " Actually, Simonson confesses, "It won't be quite like that. What I'll really be doing in that issue is an examination of the consequences of the Avengers not existing. And they *aren't* good.

"I don't think, for one issue, we need to worry about 'How to write a story without any superheroes.' There will be

Thanks to Simonson, Prince Namor can now write a book entitled *My Wife the Sea Monster*.



Flash! As we go to press, *Genetics* has been changed to *X-Terminators*.

Walt Simonson will be re-enlisting some past Avengers to restore the ranks of Earth's Mightiest Heroes.

plenty of stuff to talk about, write about and draw. Just 'cause these half-dozen costumed guys aren't there doesn't mean there won't be any big deal. As for how I'm going to handle the Avengers not existing, I would like to make that as dramatic as possible in the issue. In a sense, their existence will be felt by its absence."

An ongoing subplot throughout the Avengers' breakup and reformation will be a return appearance by an old enemy, Kang the Conqueror (who first appeared in issue #8). But this will be a Kang (or Kangs) like readers have never seen before, Simonson promises.

"I'm not doing quite a multiple-Kang-in-the-Marvel-universe situation," he points out. "My springboard is the stuff that Roger Stern did—the Council of Kangs. I thought that was a *wonderful* idea. I heard about it before I actually read it. When I read what he had done, I thought it was interesting, but it wasn't what I had seen.

"Maybe it's the difference between being an artist first and a writer first, but when I first heard the idea of a Council of Kangs, I envisioned an amphitheater the size of the Coles Field House at the University of Maryland *filled* with Kangs; the Roman Colosseum with thousands and thousands of Kangs; THE COUNCIL OF KANGS." Simonson booms, in stentorian tones. "But I opened up the book, and there were just three or four Kangs behind a podium. It was a neat story, but it wasn't what I had thought of. It was what I jumped off from.

"Time-travel in the Marvel universe seems to be what you make of it," he chuckles. "It's too complicated for me—I'm a simple guy, I like simple time-paradox situations. When you start creating all these guys as they move through time, that's too much for me. Mark Gruenwald started this whole idea, and I'm sure he'll straighten me out on it if I foul it up.

"Actually, what I'm doing is the Council of *Cross-Time* Kangs. These are the Kangs of the Omniverse. I first came across this stuff when I was reading science fiction; Keith Laumer was the first author I read who used the idea of multiple universes, in his novel *Time Bender*. That's what I'm doing."

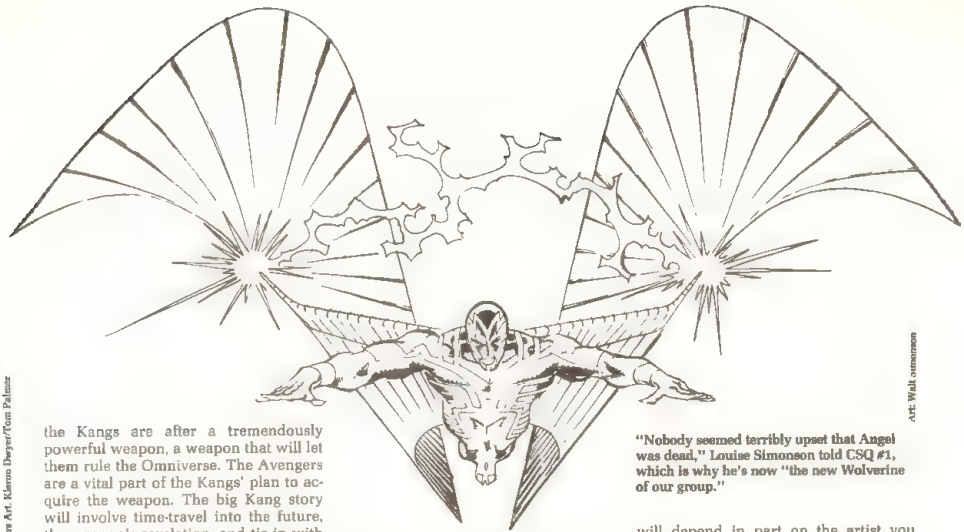
Expanding on his concept, Simonson continues, "The Marvel universe is not really '00' on the space-time axis, because our Kang is something like number 3271. But, the further away you get from the Marvel universe in these parallel worlds, the stranger and stranger the Kangs get. You start getting female Kangs, kid Kangs, alien Kangs—I'm filling my field house with a *zillion* Kangs."

Simonson says he has let Buscema's mind run free on designing the multitude of time-traveling conquerors. "I haven't specified to John whether any of them are Scarlet Centurions, Immortuses, Rama-Tuts [other incarnations of the Kang persona] or whatever. I want to give John the freedom to draw *whatever* he wants, but my feeling is that the Council takes in all those guys. There may even be a Doctor Doom Kang. Assistant editor Greg Wright wanted to make sure there was a frog Kang in there somewhere; I can't imagine why."

The Kang storyline will run as a subplot, culminating, briefly, around *Avengers* #295. Then, it will go underground, as the team breaks up and the Avengers are revitalized.

"I intend to use some of the ideas that Weezie [Simonson's wife, *X-Factor* and *New Mutants* scripter Louise Simonson] and Chris Claremont are working out for the 'Hell on Earth' sequence in the mutant books as a motive for the Avengers' revival, and then move back into a major story with the Kangs," he reveals.

"I hesitate to call it 'The Kang Wars,' we've had a lot of wars lately. Basically,



Art: Walt Simonson

"Nobody seemed terribly upset that Angel was dead," Louise Simonson told CSQ #1, which is why he's now "the new Wolverine of our group."

the Kangs are after a tremendously powerful weapon, a weapon that will let them rule the Omniverse. The Avengers are a vital part of the Kangs' plan to acquire the weapon. The big Kang story will involve time-travel into the future, the weapon's revelation, and tie in with continuity from other books. It will give me room for other stories that will grow out of the initial core of Kangs."

The artists on *The Avengers*, John Buscema and Tom Palmer, now find themselves taking their plotting cues from a writer who is also a well-respected artist. According to Simonson, the plots he gives to others to draw differs somewhat from the plots he devises for himself.

"The biggest difference between stuff I write for myself to draw and for another artist is a difference in *complexity*. I'm willing to give myself more complex subplots and interaction than I so far have given anybody else to work on. It will depend in part on the artist you work with. As a writer working with other artists, I'm still a fledgling. I've worked with Sal and John Buscema, and I've been really spoiled because they're both really good storytellers. At the same time, I don't want to present them with the problems that I myself had a difficult time solving in *Thor*; I like to present them with things that they can get their teeth into—giving me some good drawing, big pictures, that kind of stuff. Probably the work that I give other artists, so far, is a little simpler than the stuff I give myself. But with all the stuff coming up in the Kang storyline, I'm not sure that's going to be true anymore. By the time I'm through, John may have some things to say to me."

I DO NOT BID THEE WELCOME FOR WHAT GLAD GREETING CAN CLOAK THE GRIM TASK THAT CONFRONTS US -- A KINSLAYING.
BUT I SPEAK AS ONE AVENGER TO ANOTHER THY SACRED TRUST IN THIS HOUR OF TRIAL IS GRATEFULLY RECEIVED
NO OTHER WARRIOR WOULD I AS CHIEF HAVE AT MY SIDE

Art: John Buscema/Tom Palmer

"The Avengers for me, as a definition, have always been 'the most powerful heroes in the Marvel universe,' " explains Simonson as he tests the team's mettle.

THE COUNCIL OF CROSS TIME KANGS!
YOU ARE A SURVIVOR. YOUR PRESENCE HERE IS THE PROOF
NOT ONLY HAVE YOU SURVIVED YOUR LOCAL COUNCIL WAR * BUT YOU SUCCESSFULLY COUNTERED AN ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT BY A RENEGADE OF OUR OWN COUNCIL **
MOST UNUSUAL
I CONSIDER THAT YOU HAVE ALREADY PASSED THE ENTRANCE EXAMINATION
WE OFFER YOU PROVISIONAL MEMBERSHIP PENDING MORE THOROUGH CONSIDERATION, KANG OF EARTH 123488 23497
* AVENGERS #267-269
** AVENGERS #291

Art: John Buscema/Tom Palmer

Expanding on Roger Stern's idea of a Council of Kangs, Simonson will be bringing back the arch-villain by the dozens to face a new order of Avengers.

The writer/artist explains he tries to keep his artist's eye in the plots, without dictating a scene-for-scene breakdown to Buscema. "I try to think of angles in the plot that will be visually interesting," he notes. "If I have a scene that must be in there, I try to think of a way to do it that will be visually interesting, as opposed to something more narrative-oriented that wouldn't be as interesting to draw but would cover the same ground. Comics are such a shorthand, as a way of telling a story, that the visuals tell you a lot that you don't bother putting into the narrative. John can bring that across. I don't give him suggestions; I just supply a visual springboard."

Simonson's work on *Thor* rescued that book from commercial doldrums and his wife's titles, *New Mutants* and *X-Factor*, are among Marvel's bestselling comics. Does he think his scripting on *The Avengers* can

(continued on page 60)

Avengers & West Coast Avengers Art: Kieron Dwyer/Tom Palmer

Translating the Magic of WILLOW

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Marvel Comics' task was turning the George Lucas & Ron Howard epic into an exciting comic experience.

By PATRICK DANIEL O'NEILL

As far as I'm concerned, there was really only one problem in adapting *Willow*—I wish I had had more pages to work with," says Jo Duffy, the writer who translated the George Lucas-Ron Howard film into comic-book form, along with artist Bob Hall. "For marketing reasons, it has become a convention at Marvel to do film adaptations at a standard length—about 62 story pages—so it can be broken into three monthly issues or published as a Super-Special. I would have liked to have had more pages to play with.

"But I don't think there are that many problems inherent in adapting a screenplay or teleplay into comics," Duffy continues. "Among entertainment media, you can't get much closer than a script for any kind of performance and a comic book. They are much the same thing—the writer must think in pictures and dialogue. This is the first time I've ever done an adaptation, and I was a little disappointed when I realized just how little there was for me to do. I had to pick the shots and decide which moments would work best in a comic, what should be opened up or compressed, which dialogue would scan well when spoken aloud, but might not make sense on the printed page. That was usually just a matter of rephrasing what was in the screenplay."

However, to a certain extent, artist Hall disagrees with his collaborator. "The most interesting thing about working on this adaptation was discovering the *differences* between film and comics," he points out. "We tend to think of them as similar—pictorial storytelling. We talk about comics as being 'cinematic.' In reality, I found that the reference we received—some 500 Polaroid shots from the film, as well as storyboards, etc.—was never dynamic enough for comic-book purposes."

Like other comic-book creators working on a movie adaptation (see "Panels & Frames", COMICS SCENE #5), Hall discovered that comic books work at a different pace from films. "In a movie, the graph of a scene, if you will, tends to be a curve; it builds evenly and smoothly, even if it's a fast action sequence," he observes. "In comics, the pace is more staccato; the graph tends to look like an electrocardiogram, all points and peaks. It goes back to something I learned when I was taking an art course taught by John Buscema. He used to say that you can't use a photograph of a boxer for the comic book shot of somebody throwing a punch—the action isn't extreme enough, even if it's accurate. He used to use a baseball pitcher in his most extreme moments of the pitch as a reference for that kind of sequence. Even in a quiet scene, just talking heads, the comic book version will be much more dynamic."

Jo Duffy comes to *Willow* after being involved with several other Lucasfilm-connected titles, including the long-running *Star Wars* comic (STARLOG #120). She went after the assignment after being told that *Willow* the film was going to be "very good."

"Some of the people who were involved in it had read the screenplay and they told me it was great," she recalls. "I had the time available because I had just withdrawn from a project for another publisher. Two different people told me they thought *Willow* was going to be tremendous. On the strength of that, I went to the editor, Bob Budiansky, and said, 'I heard this is going to be really good. If you haven't got anybody lined up yet, I would like to write it.' "

On the other hand, this is Hall's *first* movie adaptation. "I really don't know how I got the assignment," he chuckles. "I guess it was because they wanted somebody who could do likenesses without taking a photographic approach. In addition, because of my theater work [aside from his comic-book projects, Hall is a playwright and director], I'm generally limited to mini-series and graphic-novel type projects."

"*Willow* has a real nice sense of fun about it," Duffy says. "The characters in it are a great deal of fun. I haven't seen the movie, I was only working from the script, but I was impressed by what the screenwriter [Bob Dolman] had done in terms of dialogue. The characters really lived on the printed page. I found that

delightful. In many ways, the story is a classic fairy tale. Until now, Lucasfilm has done a lot of classic fairy-tale material reinterpreted into science-fantasy. This time, it's classic fairy tale in the classic way. I *love* that."

That brings up another of the problems presented to artist Hall. "There was never enough reference," he notes. "Some scenes hadn't even been shot at the time I started drawing. Marvel sent me out to Skywalker Ranch [Lucasfilm's headquarters in Marin County, CA], where I saw about a 20-minute rough-cut of the story, and a bunch of slides, and picked up those Polaroids, but there were entire sequences that hadn't been shot.

"So, I started working from what I had, and as I got to those 'missing' scenes, Bob Budiansky would call Lucasfilm and see if they had shot them yet," Hall explains. "If they hadn't, I would skip it and go on, planning to complete those sequences later. Often, when my absolute deadline came up, the scene was still available only in storyboard form, if that, and I would have to work from storyboards. Often, those scenes were redrawn later, because the look of a character or a monster would have changed *entirely* between the storyboard and the film. Some of them were never corrected because there wasn't time. There were even scenes left out of the film that *are* in the comic. In one case, we begged them to let us keep a scene they had cut, and we won. There's a scene involving a sea monster that we found worked beautifully in comics, but they felt it wasn't as successful on film. We kept it in, with Lucasfilm's blessing. That points up again the differences between comics and film."

Unlike most projects in comics today, the *Willow* adaptation was written full-script, with Duffy providing all the dialogue and description before Hall began pencilling. "I prefer to work script first, although for 10 years, I did nothing but 'Marvel style' [plot by writer, artist draws story, writer dialogues & captions story]," Duffy says. "Lucasfilm wanted it script-first as well, because it saved them an extra step in the approval stage. Script-first is a form I feel very comfortable with.

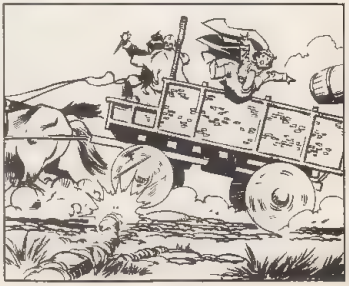
"I worked from a shooting script, but the people at Lucasfilm notified Bob Budiansky whenever something was added or revised. Bob would then notify me as soon as possible. Since we finished the comic—although we were working with as up-to-date a script and reference as possible—certain scenes have been added or dropped. This is going to be like the adaptation of the first *Star Wars* film. Although we did not knowingly omit anything or add anything, the project was being changed *after* we completed our adaptation."

The full-script form was another challenge to artist Hall, although not a major one. "Jo's script was great, because although it was full-script, she went very light on the dialogue. That meant I didn't have to follow her panel breakdowns religiously; I could split dialogue differently between panels, I could do silent panels—she *encouraged* those, as a matter of fact. I hadn't worked from a full script in about 12 years, since I did a few jobs for DC, but this was a real joy."

All Willow B&W Art: Bob Hall/Romeo Tanghal

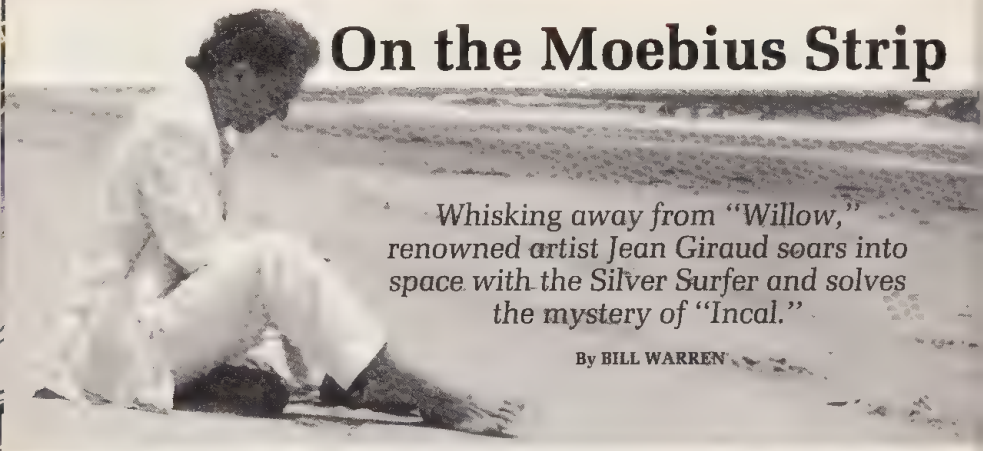
Artist Bob Hall found that he had to embellish on the Lucasfilm photo reference material in order to make the comic more graphically dynamic. Here, the evil General Kael and his minions descend on Willow and friends.

Jo Duffy kept the dialogue to a minimum, emphasizing the film's action instead—Madmartigan and Willow's daring escape.



Will *Willow* go the *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones* route, with an ongoing comic-book series following the movie adaptation? Jo Duffy thinks not. "I haven't heard anything official about sequels," she says. "That's a decision Lucasfilm will make after the film comes out. As far as an ongoing comic is concerned, I don't think it has been discussed *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones* went on because everyone knew there would be a series of films. There has only been one case I can recall where Marvel tried to do an ongoing series from a single film—*Logan's Run*—and that wound up not working at all. [Another was *2001*, which eventually mutated into *Machine Man*.] I don't think there's any question of *Willow* becoming an ongoing comic-book series unless Lucasfilm decides to make it an ongoing film series, the continuing adventures of Willow Ufgood." ■

On the Moebius Strip



Whisking away from "Willow," renowned artist Jean Giraud soars into space with the Silver Surfer and solves the mystery of "Incal."

By BILL WARREN

Moebius does not exist. Nevertheless, for Americans, this may be the Year of Moebius, with graphic novels from Epic Comics, Moebius' contributions to *Willow* and his first step into the field of American superheroics with a two-part *Silver Surfer* adventure written by Marvel's Stan Lee.

So, Moebius does exist. And he does not. He dwells within a quiet, slender man, who has, over the years, traveled from France to Tahiti to Santa Monica to the Los Angeles suburb of Woodland Hills. This Spielbergian locale is both appropriate to and wildly conflicting with the artist's style, a nest of contradictions.

Jean Giraud, one of the finest and most versatile graphic artists in the world, has for years worked in two dissimilar styles. His first fame came with the Milton Caniff-influenced realism of his popular Western, the *Lieutenant Blueberry* series, written by Jean-Michel Charlier, which Giraud signs "Gir." But, strongly influenced by American humor artists, principally those who appeared in *Mad*, Giraud began a radically different style, and used the name "Moebius," by which he's now best known.

Moebius draws in clean, fluid lines, with huge, somehow nonthreatening shapes dominating his typically vast expanses. Spaceships are made up of smooth, curved pieces, as if assembled from parts of the odd melted-looking objects that dotted Richard Powers' science-fiction book covers. Figures are generally slender and angular, and even bizarre aliens have an almost ethereal grace; all faces are expressive, and a spirit of humor, if not immediately present, frequently lurks beyond the frame.

Giraud invented Moebius not just to employ this style, but to free himself to do more humor than fans of "Gir" would have been likely to accept. Over the years, Moebius has evolved largely away from humor and delves into surrealism, reaching into Moebius' psyche for literally dreamy images like nothing else in art. Surrealism always has to have an anchor in reality, but Moebius' brand seems actually to be *taking place* in some strange other world, fragments of another, deranged-but-precise reality. Often, even violent action is frozen in space, as if everything is encased in a giant block of impossibly transparent crystal displaying sharply etched micromoments from the mind of Jean Giraud.

In 1975, Giraud co-founded the magazine *Metal Hurlant* (literally "Screaming Metal," but best known as *Heavy Metal*), which often showcased the poised work of Moebius. The animated *Heavy Metal* film includes a sequence derived from *Arzach*, a graphic novel Moebius created for the magazine.

When Giraud first began working on films, it would seem that his realistic Gir style would be the one to capture filmmakers' attention. Instead, it was the deceptively simple, open and fanciful style of Moebius that was used. Dan O'Bannon and Alexandro Jodorowsky,

best known in this country for the existentialist, surreal Western *El Topo* and *The Holy Mountain*, worked with Moebius on an elaborate but ultimately cancelled production of Frank Herbert's *Dune*. O'Bannon was later instrumental in Moebius being hired to do design work on *ALIEN*. Moebius was also a designer on *TRON* and *Masters of the Universe*. Other films are in preparation or production, including *Nemo* (from Winsor McCay's *Little Nemo in Slumberland*), Giraud's own *Internal Transfer* and possibly a feature based on his graphic saga, *The Airtight Garage*. A live-action film based on the Lt. Blueberry books is also in the works.

Late this summer, both his *Silver Surfer* collaboration with Lee and the American publication of his cosmic epic *Incal*, written by Jodorowsky, will appear. First, though the George Lucas-Ron Howard film of *Willow* will premiere this month. Surprisingly, *Willow* isn't the first time that Giraud worked with George Lucas.

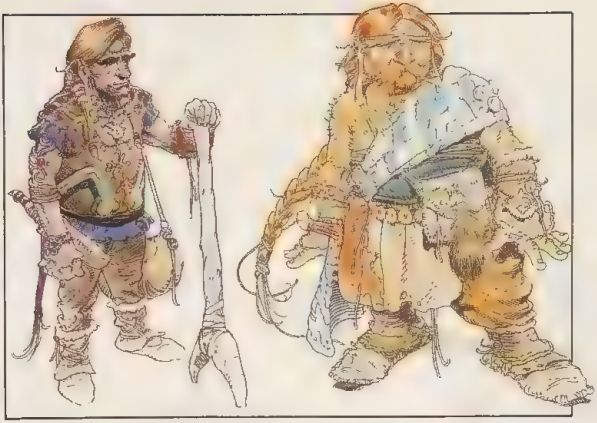


Photo Courtesy Starwatcher Graphics

Other views of Willow Ufgood show an older hero—before he was cast as a young Nelwyn.

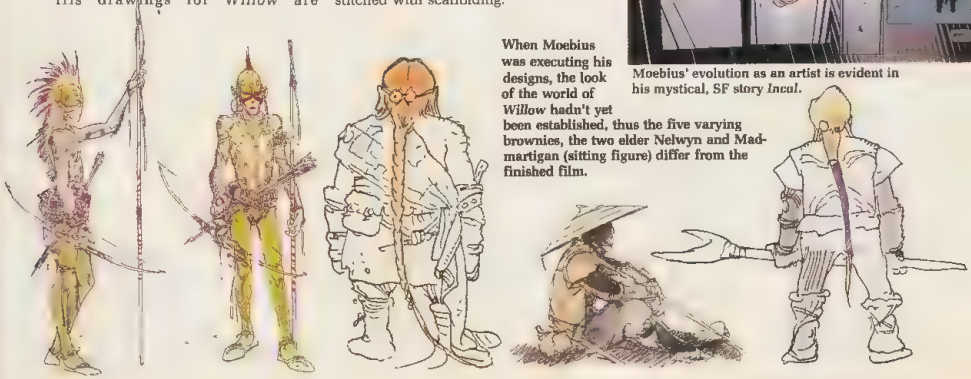
In his careful but still-being-learned English, Giraud explains that his earlier work with Lucas was "a project for Disneyland. I met him because there is a place in Tomorrowland for Lucasfilm characters. I made some drawings for this project. So, *Willow* was an opportunity for me to work again with Lucas, this time for a movie. A nice movie, very close to my world."

Giraud worked directly with Lucas, but only met director Ron Howard briefly. "I was hired for two weeks, to do sketches of all the characters. I wasn't involved in the team every day in San Francisco. The people working in that way are professional, working all the time on this kind of movie. I was the blood from outside," Giraud laughs a little shyly. His laughter is quicksilver, coming and going from his serious, narrow face like a cloud shadow on a meadow. When he speaks French, he "talks with his hands" freely; when he speaks English, his hands rest in his lap.

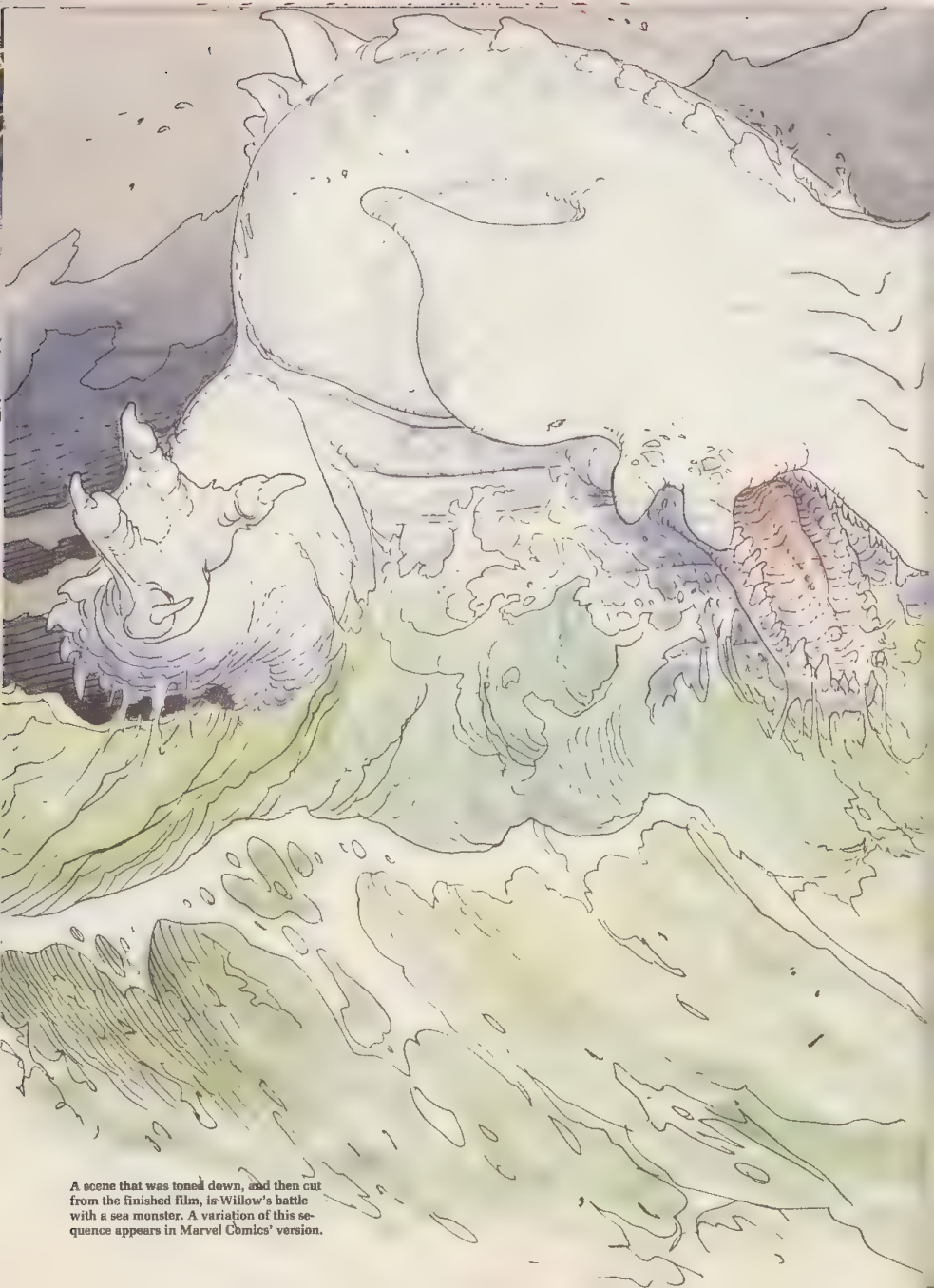
His drawings for *Willow* are fascinating, showing either fragments of an ongoing story—a small boat glides across a mountain lake, while on a peninsula with a small hut, a man watches, wondering—or details of costuming for the various characters. One of the most spectacular scenes Moebius did for *Willow*, in which a colossal sea monster erupts from a wave, bearing down on a frail-looking craft, is, alas, not in the film; the effects simply proved too difficult to do. A looming, evil castle, aflutter with bats, gnarly little dwarfs bearing clubs with heavy forked heads look Scandinavian; brownies with huge, delicate ears are slender and graceful. A warrior woman, the film's Princess Sorsha, wears a fierce but expressionless mask and carries a samurai sword. Japanese elements also appear in the garb of Madmartigan, the warrior who aids Willow in his quest. Another scene that won't turn up in the finished film features a huge spherical boulder with a slit from top to bottom, stitched with scaffolding.

Art: Moebius/Copyright Metal Hurlant/Courtesy Starwatcher Graphics

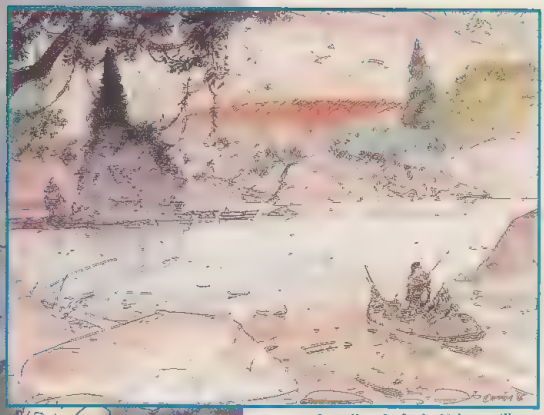
Moebius' evolution as an artist is evident in his mystical, SF story *Incal*.



When Moebius was executing his designs, the look of the world of *Willow* hadn't yet been established, thus the five varying brownies, the two elder Nelwyn and Madmartigan (sitting figure) differ from the finished film.



A scene that was toned down, and then cut from the finished film, is Willow's battle with a sea monster. A variation of this sequence appears in Marvel Comics' version.

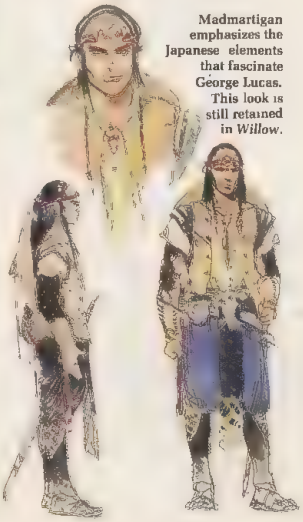


In an early *Willow* draft, the Nelwyn village received visitors. This concept was altered to the good sorceress' island prison.

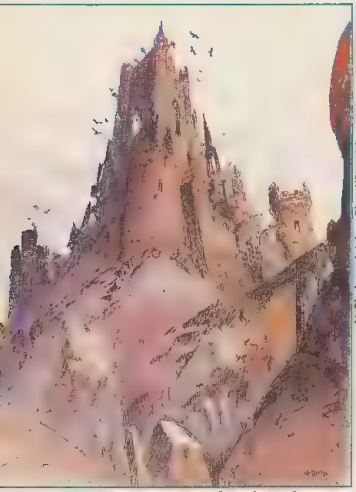
All Willow Art: Copyright 1988 Lucasfilm Ltd

"I did sketches of all the characters, all the locations," Giraud says, "but always I follow my fantasy." He gives an expressive Gallic shrug. "I gave the drawings to Lucas, but I don't know what he did with them. I will see the movie, and *then* I will know what he took."

Giraud quickly denies that Lucas limited him in any way. "No, no, no. I'm not a real professional in movies, but I feel what he wants, so I make my own limitations, then try to push those limits to the maximum while staying within the movie's field."



Madmartigan emphasizes the Japanese elements that fascinate George Lucas. This look is still retained in *Willow*.



Giraud's construction of Castle Nockmaar employs a mixture of his distinctive styles, fluid lines with an extra added depth.

A man who understands that discipline is required for creativity, Giraud considers the challenge of working in films "to be integrated into a project bigger than me, part of a team. Because when I do comics, I am alone, and I give to myself my own limits. I don't have to worry about somebody else. Even when I work with a writer, afterward I'm free, I can do what I want with a story. But in a movie, it's very different. I think about the rest of the project, about being part of the project. I learn a lot doing that."

When the hope is expressed that *Willow* will be better than *Masters of the Universe*, Giraud responds quickly. "In my position, I don't know and I don't care. If somebody asks me to do a sketch for a character, *that* is itself the challenge, not if the movie is good or bad."

Lt. Blueberry Art: Jean Giraud/Copyright 1988 Dargaud Editeur Paris

Art Courtesy Starwatcher Graphics

As opposed to his Moebius style, Jean Giraud painted a more realistic portrait of the West in his popular *Lieutenant Blueberry* series.

Starwatcher Graphics, the American company that handles Giraud's work, plans to issue a book containing samples of his motion picture art. The Moebius *Willow* sketches and drawings *may* also see publication in a book about the film's making.

From the fairy tale world of *Willow* to the cosmic, star-spanning adventures of the Silver Surfer is a small step for Moebius. Stan Lee had contacted Starwatcher Graphics about doing something with Moebius, and when Giraud and Lee met at the San Diego Comicon in 1987, they agreed on a project. "We had very good contact," Giraud says, clearly pleased. "I had dreamed for a long time of working within the American comic system, the same paper, the same printing, the same spirit. The door opened with Lee, and I came in."

Moebius worked with Lee in the standard "Marvel style." After San Diego, Lee "made a kind of treatment. I will make more story development in the drawings. After I'm done, he will write the dialogue, and we will make the color, and the printing—and then we will read the story," Giraud laughs. "This is the process."

Although Moebius is deliberately vague about the plotline, he does admit "it is typically a Silver Surfer story. Very cosmic, mythical, mystical, sentimental, and warm—full of a beautiful message."

Other sources reveal that once again Galactus returns to Earth. Although he has vowed never to harm the planet himself, he has discovered a loophole—he can talk *us* into wiping out our world, while he picks up the pieces. Religion plays a more important role in the Lee-Moebius Surfer story than previously seen in the Surfer saga; the hesitant equating of Galactus with God and the Surfer with Jesus Christ is a bit more open here.

Moebius has enjoyed his collaboration with Lee. "It has been perfect. He has left me free. The only problem is I have to start; I should be working *now*." Amazingly, for someone whose art seems so painstaking, Moebius works swiftly. *The Silver Surfer* is due at the end of May. At February's end, he has not even sketched the leading character. Yet, he's placidly certain that he will complete the story on time, for publication as two issues late this summer. A hardbound edition, including 12 extra pages of art, will appear at Christmas.

Giraud knew of the Marvel characters before he came to the United States. "I was familiar with the Silver Surfer, and almost all the work by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby. In France, it has been published for 15 years, every month. I know a little bit about the rest of American comics, but not much. It's not that I am against American comic books, because I have the same lack of real interest for it everywhere, French, European or American. I have no time to read everything. Actually, I prefer books."

However, he would still like to tackle some other American heroes, particularly those who influenced him the most as he grew up in France, The Phantom, Mandrake the Magician and others. "I'd like to do all the old famous characters, but it's only a dream. I don't know if I will."

Another Moebius graphic novel, this one scripted by Alexandro Jodorowsky, will also be published in the U.S. in 1988, the same year its final volume sees publication in France. This is *Incal*,

(continued on page 66)

Images of evil: the kabuki-like warrior princess, Sorsha; her evil mother, Queen Bavmorda and a death dog—as interpreted by the artist from an early story treatment.

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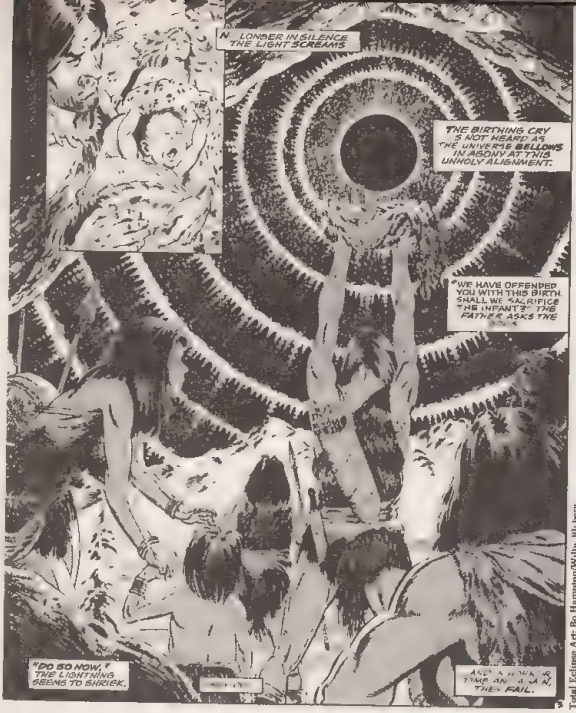
TOTAL ECLIPSE

By HANK KANALZ

Stan Woch

Marv Wolfman and Bo Hampton unite o universe's heroes


NO LONGER IN SILENCE THE LIGHT SCREAMS FORTH
THE BIRTHING CRY IS NOT HEARD AS THE UNIVERSE BELLOWS IN AGONY AT THIS UNHOLY ALIGNMENT.
"WE HAVE OFFENDED YOU WITH THIS BIRTH. SHALL WE SACRIFICE THE INFANT?" THE FATHER ASKS THE
"DO SO NOW," THE LIGHTNING SEEMS TO SHRIEK.
AND IN THIS WAY DO THE GODS OF LIGHT AND DARK TEST ONE ANOTHER. THEY FAIL.

Total Eclipse Art: Bo Hampton/Willie Blyberg

Born under the original total eclipse, Zzed must create another—*if* he is ever to meet his demise.

Total Eclipse has been in the mind of publisher Dean Mullaney for years and years," reveals editor Fred Burke. "It's one of those perfect titles that *had* to happen, given our company name. We decided that the tenth anniversary of Eclipse Comics would be the time to do it. It was one of those things that all our readers want to see—a cohesive Eclipse universe." Editor-in-chief Cat Yronwode and Dean Mullaney are both longtime fans of old Marvel's interacting characters and books, while Burke is a fan of the old DC titles. All three want to see something similar happen at Eclipse. "It's much more difficult for us, of course, because our creators own the rights to their characters," explains Burke. "We asked them if we could do this, and they said, 'No sweat—as long as we have approval of what happens to our characters!' "

For the most part, Eclipse's line of books are creator-owned. With *The New Wave* and *Airboy*, Eclipse became a player in the game of inter-related universes. "It was our intention to have the Eclipse-owned characters in the same universe. When we added new titles, we leaned towards books that would fit into our universe. The 4Winds gang obviously had strong ties to the Eclipse universe already. When they created *Prowler* and *Strike!*, they specifically geared those titles to fit into the Eclipse universe." Something like *The Liberty Project*, however, wasn't really planned from the beginning to be a part of this new universe. Also the editor for that book, Burke notes, "*Liberty Project* was just a proposal from Kurt Busiek. I thought it was really good, and that it could easily fit into our universe. Kurt agreed to let it happen, and it did."

In order to play a new game, one needs players. As the editor, Fred Burke will be co-ordinating events between the others. That's not enough, though. This game includes many other people, most prominently writer Marv Wolfman and artists Bo Hampton and Willie Blyberg. In addition to this main creative team, there is letterer Bill Pearson and the many consulting editors, namely those creators whose characters are being used.

"We wanted *Total Eclipse* to be a very high profile book. We wanted a very well known and a very talented professional. The only one in the industry who was capable of handling something like this—and we could think of—was Marv Wolfman," Burke declares. "With his *Crisis on Infinite Earths* experience, we felt Marv could bring these characters together."

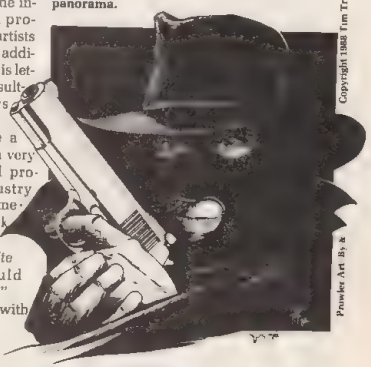
When Wolfman went out to dinner with some friends at the Eclipse offices, the project was offered to him. "I turned it *down*," he confesses. "I just didn't have time to do it. They started talking about the villain, and it was a theme I liked. As a writer, even after turning down a proposal, your mind keeps going. By dinner's end, I liked the idea so much more that I committed myself to it."

Bo Hampton was Wolfman's choice as artist for the book. Hampton was working on *Lost Planet* when he was first offered *Total Eclipse*. He initially turned it down, also due to time constraints. He, too, had second thoughts and decided to commit himself. "I'm really excited about working on this book. I'm happy they were able to get Will [Blyberg], too," says Hampton. "As for *Lost Planet*, it *will* be out this summer. It's a project I'm very close to, and I want to see that through."

Virtually every Eclipse character participates as they can. "Zot and Portia Prinz are not being used," relates Burke. "They're such good books, too! Hopefully, the excitement of the series will encourage new readers to pick up these books as well." However, readers can count on Miracleman, Aztec Ace, Strike, the Prowler, the Airfighters, Masked Man, the Liberty Project, the New Wave, Mr. Monster and even Beanish from Larry Marder's *Tales of the Beanworld* to have roles in *Total Eclipse*.

Everyone whose characters are featured is a consulting editor. The system to produce the book is quite time-intensive. Burke and Wolfman work out the plot for the issue. Then, Burke sends the plot off to those creators who will be affected by it. They either approve it; or suggest how to *improve* it. The plot is then pencilled by Hampton. From there, it goes back to Wolfman, who dialogues the pages, and then to Burke, who edits them. He in turn calls the consulting editors and explains

The pernicious Prowler and his pugnacious protege play pivotal parts in this powerful panorama.



Prowler Art: Bo &

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Airboy, Valkyrie, Skywolf & The Hoags: Trademark Eclipse Enterprises, Inc. Miracleman Trademark: Eclipse Enterprises, Inc./Alan Moore. Prowler: Trademark Truman/Snyder/Price Strike: Trademark Dixon/Lyle Aztec Ace: Trademark Doug Moench

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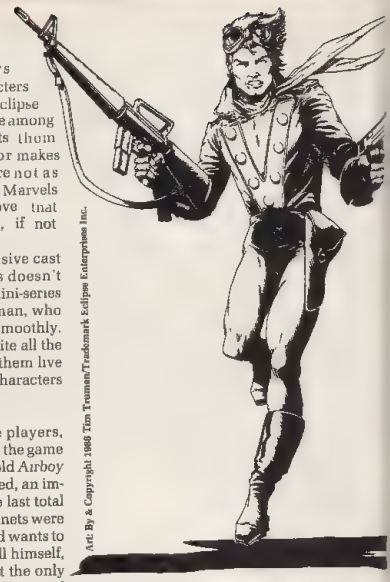
HE HAS NOT DIED
HE CAN NOT DIE
PLANETS IN ALIGNMENT
STARS IN ALIGNMENT
LEVERAGE PRESS ON THE BRITISH TO ATTACK THE CHURCH
AND THE ONLY HOPE THAT SPARKS SOME FAR-DISTANT LIGHT
UNTIL THERE SHALL BE NO MORE
IS SILENCE

Total Eclipse Art: Bo Hampton/Willie Blyberg

Zzed, the immortal menace, drifts through the ages, seeking death for himself and anyone who gets in his way.



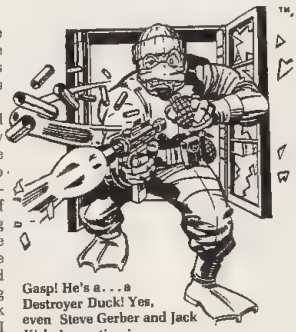
Art: By & Copyright 1988 Tim Truman/Trademark Eclipse Enterprises Inc.

Forty years ago, Airboy's father was able to foil Zzed's mechanations. Can Airboy do the same today?

have had a good story, but that's not why it existed. *Total Eclipse* is also meant to show new readers what this company's characters are like, what good characters Eclipse has. There seems to be a prejudice among DC and Marvel fans that prevents them from looking at alternatives,or makes them assume that those books are not as good *because* they aren't Marvels or DCs. This book serves to prove that Eclipse's comics are interesting, if not more so, than the majors."

Having to deal with an expansive cast from different creators' minds doesn't seem to trouble Wolfman. The mini-series utilizes Aztec Ace and Miracleman, who both make the story flow quite smoothly. "Between these two, you can unite all the other characters. Plus, most of them live on Earth, and a number of the characters have met in the past."

Now that Eclipse has the players, pawns and rules defined, the game begins. The villain is an old Airboy bad guy from the '40s named Zzed, an immortal who was born during the last total eclipse, when all the stars and planets were aligned. Zzed is tired of living and wants to die, but every time he tried to kill himself, he has failed. Zzed believes that the only way he can die is during another total eclipse, like the one under which he was born. He receives these visions and dreams, guiding him to build a machine supposedly capable of realigning all the planets and stars.



Destroyer Duck Art: Trademark & Copyright 1988 Steve Gerber & Jack Kirby

Gasp! He's a . . . a Destroyer Duck! Yes, even Steve Gerber and Jack Kirby's creation is lending his firepower to undo Zzed's unlikely undertaking.

"Zzed is just crazy enough to believe this," says Burke. "Unfortunately, Zzed isn't aware that he is being manipulated. Therefore, you have a lot of twists, turns and cross purposes. Plots within plots. Lots of fun!" reveals Wolfman. Longtime Eclipse readers will know who's behind this scheme by the first issue's end, assures Burke and Wolfman. Newer readers will have to let the plot develop and unfold. "In some respects, newer readers will have much more fun with *Total Eclipse*."

It will take almost every character Eclipse has, spanning time, space and dimensions. For instance, Miracleman comes to "our" Earth, knowing that if he doesn't help the heroes, *his* world will also be destroyed. Aztec Ace plays a crucial role as well, searching time and space for other heroes. In one instance, Ace goes to Scout's world, but Scout is not there to help. "Tim thought it was important to fit Scout into the book without really involving him. Scout is a damn important part of Eclipse," Burke observes.

Ace even recruits Beanish from the Beanworld. Burke comments, "My first thought was that with a title like *Total Eclipse*, I wanted a *real* total eclipse—something in the sky that is just unheard of. And the *one* comic that a total eclipse would affect the most was *Beanworld*. Larry was, like, 'Wow!' over the idea. *Beanworld* is an ecological fairy tale; it derives all its power from the sun. I was really pleased that Larry would get involved!"

The death toll specifics are being kept quiet right now, although "people will die," Wolfman and Burke announce, "people readers aren't expecting to die."

In addition to each issue's main 32-page story, there will be four pages of Eclipse history by Dean Mullaney and a 10-page interlude featuring a major character.

(continued on page 44)

the situation to them. He also reads the dialogue to make sure the characters are indeed in character. "I'm not as talented as B.C. Boyer, so I don't act out the comics over the phone!" laughs Burke.

"I'm working with very professional people here," the editor notes. "They understand the rules of the game. The rules are to either accept what we do or to tell us how to make it better." The consulting editors cannot just say, "NO!" If they could, Wolfman would be rewriting constantly. "It helps having people like Tim Truman call up and explain the Prowler to us." Truman sent Wolfman and Burke pages of notes on who Leo Kragg and Scott Kida are, what makes them tick and do the things they do. Burke adds, "I know I wouldn't have the confidence I have without these consulting editors backing me up, ensuring me that these characters are being done right! I feel I have a good grasp on all the characters I'm using. I feel Marv does too, but that's not enough. Eclipse's comics are more than just what you see on paper. They are the highly *individualistic* vision of the creators and it's *vital* that we use that input."

Wolfman feels that this book is entirely different from something like his *Crisis on Infinite Earths* limited series. "*Crisis* was created to fix DC continuity and have it make some sense. It was created with specific goals in mind," explains Wolfman. "*Total Eclipse* was created to have a good story, and that's it. *Crisis* might

Together Again—For the FIRST Time!

By KIM HOWARD JOHNSON

It's the crossover book from the people who *don't* believe in crossover books. Ready or not, though, many of First Comics' most popular heroes are now meeting up at the *Crossroads*.

The occasion is a rarity, explains First editor Rick Oliver. Since very few of First's titles lend themselves to team-ups, this may be the *only* time many of the characters ever meet.

"We want to leave the doors open," Oliver explains, "but these team-ups are not something that has unlimited potential for the First audience. We pride ourselves on the fact that our books are all individual entities that stand on their own. We didn't even attempt to use many of our books in *Crossroads*, because there simply isn't any way! I mean, you won't see *Lone Wolf* or *Elric* in there!"

Rather than attempt a huge multi-part story with dozens of tie-ins, the five issues of *Crossroads* stand on their own as *individual* stories. Oliver says the stories aren't connected by an overall plot, but by a character from the previous issue. Thus, after the first issue's Whisper/Sable story, the second book features Sable and the Badger, followed by the Badger and Luther Ironheart. The fourth issue includes Luther, Judah Maccabee and Grimjack, and the grand finale throws together Grimjack, Nexus and Dreadstar.

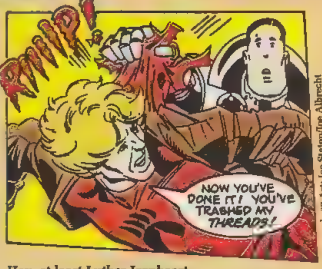
"The series goes from 20th century Earth, slowly and progressively getting more outrageous and science-fiction-oriented," he says.

Crossroads actually goes back about two years, when Mike Baron first proposed a Nexus/Dreadstar mini-series set in Cynosure, which would also allow an ap-

Art: Steve Rude

Sable and the Badger—a team-up for violent animal lovers everywhere.

Crossing paths at the "Crossroads," Sable, Badger, Grimjack and friends find themselves working at cross-purposes.



Crossroads #3 Art: Joe Staton/Joe Albrecht

Hey, at least Luther Ironheart didn't step on the Badger's blue suede shoes.

THE ABSENCE OF SPIRIT IS A VENOM YOU CANNOT SWALLOW, JUDAH. IT MUST BE REGAINED.
BUT I SHALL DO AS YOU SAY, MASTER TENGU. WHAT ELSE IS THERE...?

Crossroads #4 Art. Shawn McManus

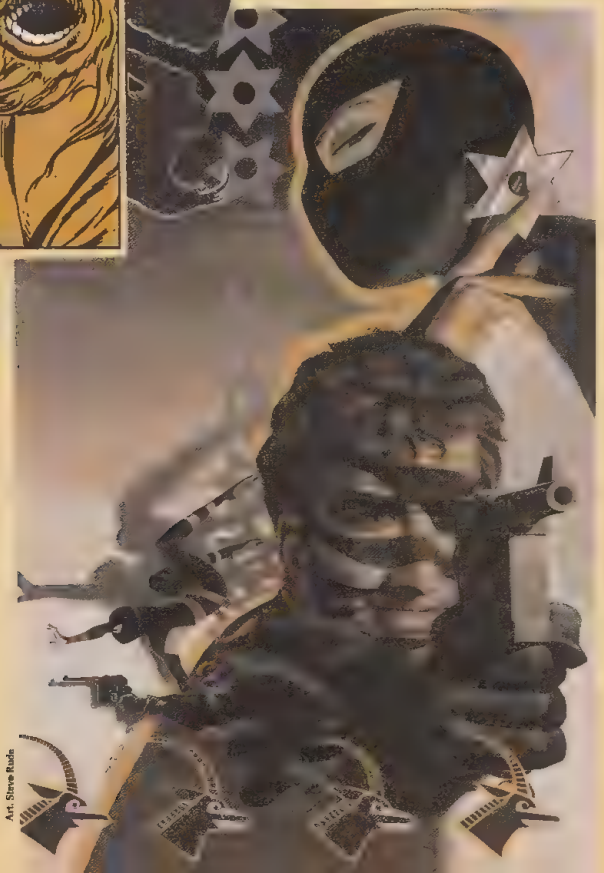
All calls in from New York and Encino.
Shhh! Be very quiet. Whisper's hunting Sable.
BY THE WAY
"DO YOU HAVE SOMEONE FOLLOWING ME?"

Crossroads #1 Art. Cynthia Martin

pearance by Grimjack. About a year later, Roger Salick suggested a Judah Maccabee solo story. Also, during a discussion with Oliver, Steven Grant worked out a team-up story involving Jon Sable with Grant's own creation, Whisper. Although none of them knew it at the time, they had already developed issues one, four and five of *Crossroads*.

"At one of our editorial meetings, I suggested a line of deluxe one-shots featuring

A troubled Judah Maccabee heads home searching for answers, little realizing that he'll find them at the *Crossroads*.



Art. Steve Rude

our characters, both to show off our heroes in a really slick format, and to work with artists we really enjoy who don't have time to do a regular series for us," says Oliver. "From that grew *Crossroads*.

"We realized we had three unrelated books, but we found a theme that would link them up. First *rarely* crosses over characters, but we decided to feature two different characters in each of the books, and link them together with one character from the previous book. The Badger became the natural link to get us from the 20th century world of Whisper and Sable to 25th century outer space!"

Unlike the *Secret Wars* or *Millennium* titles with their dozens of tie-in books, *Crossroads* was meant to stand alone. However, "there are books that do lead into *Crossroads* #5. The double-sized *Nexus* #50, along with *Grimjack* #52 and *Dreadstar* #39 all build up to the final *Crossroads*, for consistency. That's not to say one has to read those in order to read *Crossroads*, though," and Oliver emphasizes that *all* of the issues can be read and enjoyed independently.

"It's a personal prejudice of mine," he says. "I'm on record as saying that I'm too stupid to understand all these *Crises on Infinite Twinkie Earths*. It's just too much. Too many books to read and too many plot details."

Mike Baron, who wrote the second and fifth *Crossroads*, had been involved in DC's *Millennium*, but he says the two titles are completely different. "*Millennium* was a logistical nightmare. Steve Engelhart is an old friend and a great writer, but what he did was more similar to what General Eisenhower did with D-Day than what you do with a story! We were all drawn into it and given our marching orders, but I'm afraid I got lost in the wilderness and wandered around for most of the war!" Baron laughs. "*Millennium* was *the* sales success of 1987, but I think the broader the story is, the more it tends to dilute—and that thing ran through 37 jillion titles!"

The co-creator of Nexus and Badger says he had been planning *Nexus* #50 as a Prestige Format book anyway when Oliver approached him about *Crossroads*.

"Working with characters from other creators was no problem," Baron says. "I've been reading *Sable* since it began,

The company's quietest killers, Sable and Whisper, kick off *Crossroads*.

Crossroads #2 Art: Angel Medina ■ Rod Whigham/Sam Grainger

All Crossroads Art Courtesy & Copyright 1988 First Publishing Inc.

and he works well with the Badger. In *Crossroads* #2, Sable is hired by a shadowy government organization to track down some Vietnam vets who appear to be targets of assassins and he has to find Badger."

Baron says his most pleasant surprise on the book was when Oliver returned his first draft, telling him to punch up the initial meeting between Badger and Sable. "He said Badger wasn't crazy enough—and he was absolutely right! I'm much happier with it now! Sable is a great character. His personality has been so firmly established that he was fun to write.

"The end of that story leads into Roger's Badger/Luther Ironheart story, so I did a two-page framing sequence. Roger is very familiar with my characters. He has Ham, the Weather Wizard, invest in a cheapie Kung Fu movie like *25th Century Ninja*, and they hire Badger as a martial arts consultant. Badger conspires to go into the future and study the techniques so the film will be authentic."

Roger Salick—who is scripting the third and fourth *Crossroads*—agrees with Baron that the characters have been enormous fun to write. "I had to figure out how to work Luther into the third issue because he and the Badger, who is literally and figuratively lunatic, are really diverse. They're so completely different from one another, they complement each other, so I almost got a comic/straight-man relationship. That story moves everywhere from the future to a Hollywood set to a battle with demonic forces at Stonehenge. It's pretty wild, but I had a lot of fun with it!"

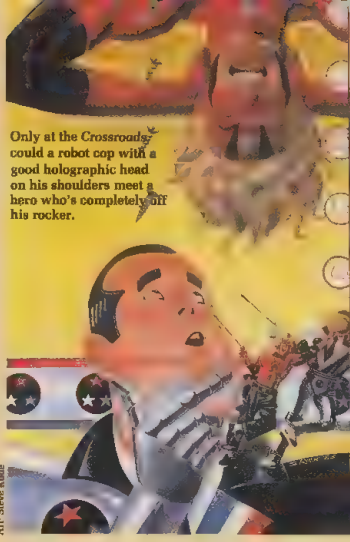
Dealing with diverse creators as well proved to be just as easy.

"Badger and Judah were created by Mike, and it was Mike who conned me into doing comics in the first place," says Salick. "John Ostrander [CSQ #2] and I were going to write issue four, involving Grimjack, together, which would have been a delight. Apparently, though, he was quite busy, so we didn't collaborate on the plot, but it went ahead with John's blessing."

Salick—who regularly writes the Judah Maccabee back-up features—says he used *Crossroads* to treat one of his favorite characters somewhat differently. "Judah is fun, he can be comical, heroic, ridiculous or dead serious. But, because Judah is often so light-hearted and trivialized, adventure-wise, I did something different. Judah suffers prolonged self-doubts in this particular issue; it shows a side of Judah that hasn't come out before. He almost has a death wish for part of the issue. It's up to his old pal Grimjack to finally haul him out of it and make him get back to saving the universe.

"I also enjoyed the 46-page format. People were intimating horror stories to me about doing 46-page books. I guess I didn't find it that bad, not with *these* characters!" Salick exclaims.

Sable, the Badger and a friend reach a fork in the *Crossroads* as they escape from masked assassins.



Only at the *Crossroads* could a robot cop with a good holographic head on his shoulders meet a hero who's completely off his rocker.

Art: Steve Rude

Oliver explains that the series' creators have been able to succeed with *Crossroads* because they didn't compromise any of the characters. "We carefully selected characters who work well together. We didn't do anything farfetched," he says, and points out the extensive cooperation from their creators, including Howard Chaykin (CSQ #2).

"The reason we're using Luther, instead of Reuben Flagg, is that we felt he was the only one from Flagg's world that Badger could interreact with," says Oliver. "Howard was cooperative to a fault. He was immediately receptive when we called him, and said, 'Sure, it sounds like fun to me!' But it was our idea going in that Luther was really the *only* character that would feel right teaming with the Badger."

The hardest book to coordinate was the last issue, as Dreadstar definitely exists in a *separate* reality.

"Luckily, we've got this handy device invented by Peter Gillis—the city of Cynosure. We don't want to use Cynosure as a *deus ex machina*—a convenient device to bring people together without a plot—but it's certainly handy for this issue," Oliver explains. "Here, we're dealing with two alternate versions of the history of our galaxy.

"Dreadstar destroyed the Milky Way in his reality, so when he comes to Cynosure, he impinges the consciousness of the Mark, who tells Nexus to go out and assassinate all these mass murderers.

(continued on page 44)

Although he's co-plotting as well as drawing the Man of Steel's adventures every month, Ordway admits, "I'm a late bloomer as a *Superman* fan."

The Other Man Behind

SUPERMAN

When the Man of Steel beckons, it's up, up & away for all-star artist Jerry Ordway.

By HANK KANALZ

Superman may be able to change the course of mighty rivers with his bare hands, but for almost two years, he has been at the mercy of a man who routinely gives him more trouble than Lex Luthor ever dreamed of causing. Armed not with a chunk of Kryptonite, but only lead and graphite, Jerry Ordway has kept the Adventures of Superman *as action-packed as possible.*

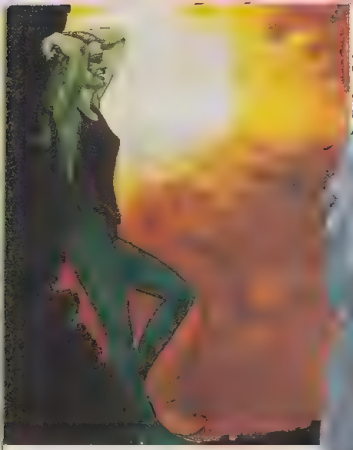
Ironically, the young Ordway had always preferred the works of Neal Adams and Wally Wood, two artists who influenced his work, to the exploits of the Man of Steel. Yet, thanks to the first Christopher Reeve film and the chance to become involved in a project's development, the artist has taken to the hero faster than a speeding bullet.

COMICS SCENE: How did you break into comics?

JERRY ORDWAY: I tried on many occasions before actually breaking in. Mike Machlan and I went down to New York in summer '77. We went to get work at Marvel, but we brought our samples and met with editors at DC and Vince Colletta, their [then] art director. He basically gave me a hard time because I didn't have any pencil samples; all I had was this inked stuff. Mike Machlan almost got work, but the "DC Implosion" [a mass cancellation of titles] took care of that. So, we went to Marvel. Jim Shooter was just an editor then. He met us in the lobby and gave us a real good critique. Then, he went into the bullpen and got all

Art: Jerry Ordway

Jerry Ordway 1979



Art: Jerry Ordway

Art: Jerry Ordway

An example of one of Ordway's own original renderings.

sorts of photocopies of stuff on hand so we could do some ink samples. And we never did.

CS: Did you have any formal art training?

Ordway: I went to a technical high school. They had a three-year commercial art course. It was very basic; it really only nurtured me and I learned—and still do—most everything on my own. Most of my art training came from a commercial art studio. I learned how to do storyboards, how to paint—stuff *other* than comics, which I think is very important. If I hadn't gotten that job, I wouldn't be as broad-based as I am. It really got me looking at other artists; I no longer had that one-track mind on comics. It was like schooling for me, even though I got paid for it.

One of my last projects there was doing these activity coloring books for Western. I did one with DC heroes that went over well. I ended up working with another guy and did four books, *Everything Workbooks*, with Marvel characters.

I was winding up that project and I had one-and-a-half more books to do. It was summer 1980 and the Chicago Comics Con was coming up. I heard that DC would look at portfolios, so I thought, "I'll take a shot at it." The DC people who had approved my project had liked what I did. I thought that they might know who I was, so I took a shot at it. I sat in line in a real hot room with 20 other people. We sat and sat. Joe Orlando was at the end of his day, and he looked like he was ready to burn out. Paul Levitz kept coming up to him and saying that it was time to go to dinner, but Joe kept saying, "I've gotta get this done. These kids have been waiting!" I kept thinking, "Please, please, get to me before you quit!" I was the *last* person he saw! I got up there and he was looking at the DC stuff I did for Western. Paul came up again to tell Joe that everyone was going to dinner. He looked down at my name, looked up at my face and said, "JERRY! We've been trying to get a hold of you for months! Give me your address and we'll send you some stuff!" So, after waiting for hours in this hot room, it turned out it could have been much easier!

CS: Your big break came with *All-Star Squadron*. Did you debate taking the plunge into full-time comics work?

Ordway: Well, two months before they offered me that book, Paul Levitz called and offered me the position of finisher of a then-new book, *The New Teen Titans*. I turned it down because at the time, I knew I couldn't handle a monthly book *and* a full-time job. Plus, I wasn't entirely convinced that I wanted to leave my job in commercial art. So, I turned it down and didn't really push for extra work. Well, times changed and I decided that I should

"The first Superman movie reopened my childhood liking for the character," says Ordway.

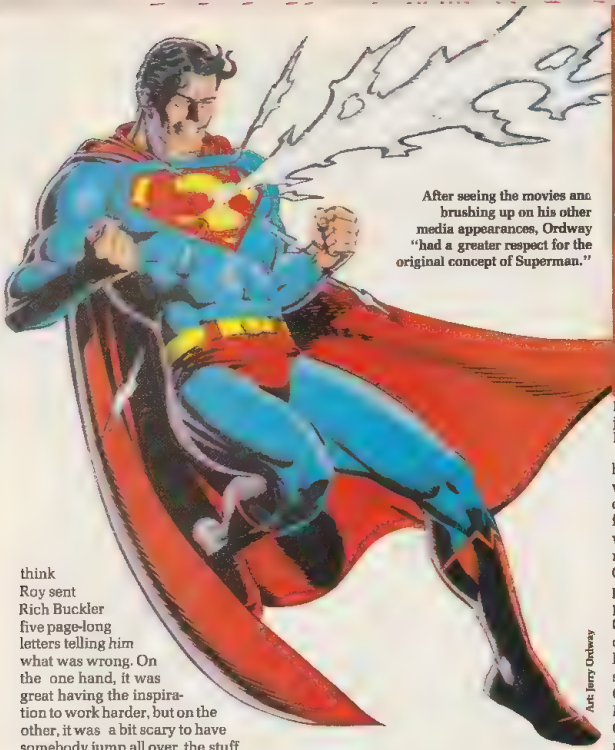
Photo: Jonathan Peterson

"I always feel more comfortable doing everything," confesses Ordway.

give comics a full shot. They offered me *All-Star Squadron* in December '80.

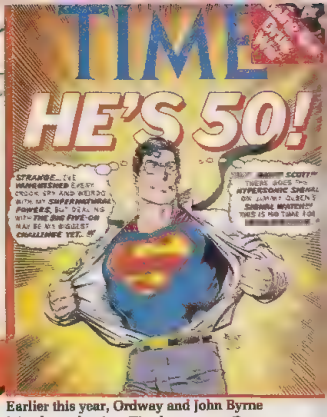
CS: What was it like to work with writer Roy Thomas on *All-Star*?

Ordway: It was very frustrating! Roy had such a different concept of what the book should have looked like. For a while, he would send me *page-by-page, panel-to-panel* comments on the things I was doing wrong. He was *extremely* picky. It pushed me to do better work, plus I was pushing myself, but I was frustrated to a degree because I thought I would *never* please this guy. One of the things Roy mentioned to me was that his original choice for the book was Dick Giordano, and he was comparing me to Dick. I never felt comparable with what Dick was doing, but I looked at his work, and it made me keep on my toes and add a realistic quality. And I just don't



Art: Jerry Ordway

After seeing the movies and brushing up on his other media appearances, Ordway "had a greater respect for the original concept of Superman."


TIME
HE'S 50!
STRANGE... I'VE MANAGED TO STAY UNDER 40 AND WEIRD WITH MY SUPERNATURAL POWERS, BUT DEALING WITH THE BIG FIVE-OH MAY BE MY BIGGEST CHALLENGE YET. SIGH
SCOTT!"
WHERE DOES THE HYPERSONIC SIGNAL ON JIMMY OLSEN'S SIGNAL WATCH? THIS IS NO TIME FOR

Earlier this year, Ordway and John Byrne joined together in a Timely team-up. Byrne has since left the Superman mythos.

think Roy sent Rich Buckler five page-long letters telling *him* what was wrong. On the one hand, it was great having the inspiration to work harder, but on the other, it was a bit scary to have somebody jump all over the stuff.

CS: How did your first pencilling break occur?

Ordway: Well, on *All-Star*, Roy would erase panels that he didn't like and he would say, "Draw this in there and you'll get paid for it!" For some reason, they never got Rich to change his work. That always bothered me because the penciller should fix it if he did it wrong, and if he did it right, then DC should pay *him* to change it. But for some reason, it always came down to me. And I thought that that would be a good way to show them that I could pencil. Unfortunately, this became a situation that they relied upon, and I had to fight to get myself my own pencil work.

Finally, Ernie Colon called and offered me the Creeper back-up in *The Flash*. I figured that that would be better; I would suffer and pencil and ink only seven pages a month until they offered me something better. I called up Len Wein and told him I was going to quit *All-Star*. He shot back, "Why don't you pencil *All-Star*?" So, Roy switched Adrian Gonzales to *Arak* and put me on the book.

CS: What's the story behind your leaving *All-Star* for *Infinity, Inc.*?

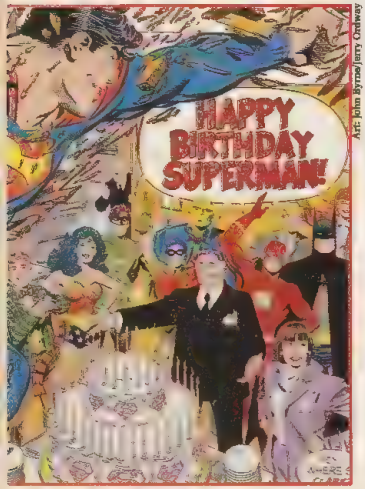
Ordway: I was burnt out. I had only pencilled *All-Star* for a little over a year, but I had been on the book since the beginning. I was tired of doing 1940s-type stuff. I like doing it, but I wanted to do some things from the '80s. And to be honest, the book wasn't selling all that great. *Infinity* gave me the chance to work on a Baxter book. Originally, Mike Machlan was going to pencil it and I was going to ink it, while I pencilled the *Justice Society* mini-series. Once we started developing *Infinity*, the deadline crunched us so badly that Mike had to step aside and we all agreed that *I* should pencil it.

CS: Who was responsible for the *Infinity, Inc.* character designs?

Ordway: I would have to say Mike did most of the work, since I was still working on the other book. I told Mike what I had in mind for them. Mike and I went to a bar and we designed the costumes on cocktail napkins! Mike drew them up again later, and I colored them. We sent them to Roy for approval or disapproval. Jade was a real battle. She was a green character, and Roy had his heart set on her having long hair. She-Hulk was being promoted at the same time, so we had a problem with the visual similarities. Mike gave her a haircut and DC told us that short hair just wasn't sexy. They also wanted a yellow and green costume. Finally, Roy told Mike that Jenette [Kahn, DC publisher] demanded that Jade have long hair. It was all so foolish. If you notice, Jade's hair gets progressively shorter over the course of her appearances.

CS: Why did you leave *Infinity*?

Ordway: I really don't think Roy was putting his best foot forward, since he was working on movie scripts and other projects. It was a cop-out when he came up with his tremendous epic. As a reader, I like to see sub-plots that will develop into a story a couple of issues down the line. That way, I know that the writer and artist know what's in store for the future. I never got that impression working on the book; it always seemed that everything was made up at the last second.



Art: John Byrne/Jerry Ordway

The Metropolis Marvel's birthday bash—one of those team-ups that just had to be planned.

CS: After *Infinity*, you did more inking work, including a stint over John Byrne on *Fantastic Four*. How different was it doing that book, especially inking an accomplished creator?

Ordway: It was real nice to work on a book that sold extremely well. It justified all the work you put into inking, since it was more available to the public.

It was scary inking over Byrne. I was nervous! Everyone would be picking up this book because Byrne pencilled it, not because I was inking it. So, I decided to be as faithful as I could, but still add something to it. I did the first issue, and I settled into it. It was fun!

CS: What do you think makes John Byrne so popular?

Ordway: His enthusiasm. He *likes* what he's doing, and he *knows* what he's doing. He gives people what they're looking for. He may not always challenge you—I think Alan Moore can challenge you as a reader, as does Frank Miller—but I think Byrne gives you entertainment—good comics. Within his storylines, there are always interesting things happening. He also strips the garbage off of old characters.

CS: And after eight issues of *FF*, you went to *Crisis on Infinite Earths*.

Ordway: DC offered that to me as a teaser. I had been in touch with them while I worked at Marvel; I heard from DC *more* when I wasn't working for them than I did when I worked for them for the previous four years. *Crisis* was very far behind, it was a *big* book, and they didn't want to get off schedule. So, they thought that if I inked it, I could pencil parts of it in case they fell behind. Pencilling never really came about—the book's lateness constricted my schedule.

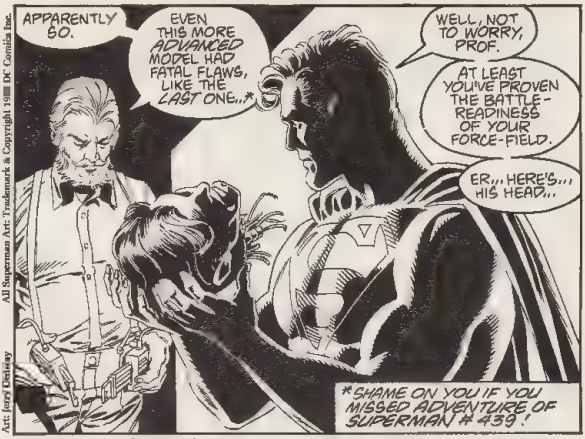
CS: What do you think makes *Crisis* artist George Perez popular?

Ordway: Again, I think it's enthusiasm. For instance, he went the extra mile on *Crisis*—people got on his back about being late, but considering what he had to accomplish with all those characters—it's not like he was sitting around and watching three hours of *Gilligan's Island*. Everyone in *Crisis* had a distinct feel to them. George can connect with the readers because he's a fan, too.

CS: You are on *Adventures of Superman* now. How long did it take for you to get that assignment?

Ordway: When I first quit *Infinity*, I told DC that one of my reasons for quitting was not getting story input and not really feeling appreciated. I had turned down several opportunities for work from Marvel, like *Alpha Flight*, and here I was, being left out of some of the bigger projects at DC.

At the time, DC was beginning their plans to re-do the three big characters. For a year, I knew I would have *something* to do with the new Superman, I just didn't know what. They were trying to get Byrne, Walt Simonson, Miller and some others. In the final plans, Byrne did two books and Marv Wolfman and I did *Adventures*.


APPARENTLY SO.
EVEN THIS MORE ADVANCED MODEL HAD FATAL FLAWS, LIKE THE LAST ONE..*
WELL, NOT TO WORRY, PROF.
AT LEAST YOU'VE PROVEN THE BATTLE-READINESS OF YOUR FORCE-FIELD.
ER,,, HERE'S,,, HIS HEAD,,,
*SHAME ON YOU IF YOU MISSED ADVENTURE OF SUPERMAN # 439 !
All Superman Art: Trademark & Copyright 1988 DC Comics Inc.
Art: Jerry Ordway

Superman contemplates *Hamlet*, as a bit of the past (the Super-robot doubles) bites the dust.

CS: What did you think of Superman, and how has that changed since you started co-planning his fate?

Ordway: I like him. I'm a late bloomer as a Superman fan, though. I was pretty much a Marvel fan through most of my childhood. The Superman movie was a turning point for me—I *really* liked the first movie and it reopened my childhood liking for the character. Of course, I watched the old TV series and cartoons. By the time I was on *All-Star*, I had a greater respect for the original concept of Superman.

CS: As the co-plotter on *Adventures*, how much say do you have with what will happen to the characters?

Ordway: Whenever I think of an idea, I'll call up John, or he'll call me, and we'll talk it over. It's pretty much an equal collaboration. We have been busy mapping out subplots that will be running through the book as well as the two others, which is something we really couldn't do before when Marv Wolfman was on it. The mapping is very general, but it helps us shoot for things, like crossover stories.

CS: Since you've become the co-plotter, has your method of drawing changed?

Ordway: Now I have another inker, so it's a little different. I've gone back to the old school method of pencilling tightly and sending them in to get lettered. Since I've been co-plotting, I haven't had to do thumbnails or as much lightboxing. I do quick breakdowns for myself, but I'm pretty much drawing directly on the paper. That adds a little more of the bounce.

CS: Are you planning anything with the newly created "pocket universe" introduced with the last Superboy story?

Ordway: We've come up with something that I think is really neat. It will piss some people off, but just as many will appreciate it. That and *Crisis* gives us a chance to re-explain things. We can say that those old stories really happened, but maybe not *exactly* the way they were originally told. All that crazy stuff that happened to Jimmy Olsen, for instance, could be explained as an "embellished" tale told by Jimmy. If you want to read continuity into it, you can! It doesn't affect new readers.

CS: What about Supergirl's reintroduction in *Superman* #16?

Ordway: Things are not as they seem.

I can tell you this: I had suggested a storyline earlier to Byrne and [*Superman* editor] Mike Carlin. I wanted to use Power Girl because I had fun with the character back on *All-Star* and *Infinity*. At the same time, there were no plans for her in *Warlord*, and I wanted to do a story with her that would involve some Antarctic mission and these people would find an icecap with this nude blonde woman encased in it. This woman wouldn't have any memories, but she has these super-powers. Some promoter gets a hold of her and promotes her as Supergirl. That was the springboard for the storyline. But then Power Girl was in a mini-series by Paul Kupperburg. So, instead, we're doing a similar story, except that the figure will be wearing a facsimile of Superman's costume.

CS: Where's this Supergirl from?

Ordway: Actually, she is from the pocket universe. In that world, Lex Luthor creates a new Supergirl and sends her to our universe to get Superman, since he doesn't

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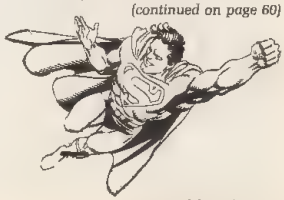
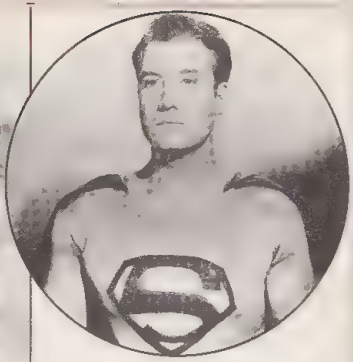


Art: John Byrne/Jerry Ordway

Larson Photo: Courtesy Jack Larson



Associate producer Jack Larson is only now willing to accept his part in the *Superman* mythos alongside George Reeves.

JIMMY OLSEN Grows Up

Jack Larson puts aside his bow tie and signal watch even as he takes a last look at his alter-ego.

By STEVE SWIRES

All actors must face the frustrating vagaries of show business in pursuing their particular muse. But Jack Larson was forced to tolerate an even more debilitating burden, as a victim of the restrictive policies of a comic-book company.

Bound to an ironclad contract with National Periodicals Publications (now DC Comics) for his six-year—from 1951 to 1957—run as precocious cub reporter Jimmy Olsen in television's beloved *Adventures of Superman*, Larson was systematically prevented from capitalizing on his brief status as a sought-after teen idol. (Larson discusses his memorable *Superman* sojourn in an extensive two-part interview in STARLOG #130 & #131).

Legally barred from accepting prestigious stage and screen assignments, he grew increasingly disenchanted with his profession.

Abandoning his acting career entirely, Larson found a more rewarding outlet for his creative expression—as an accomplished playwright, an acclaimed librettist and a perceptive film producer. Finally, after three decades out of the limelight, he has come to terms with his indelible image as Superman's pal.

"At the time, I *suffered* because of those lost roles," the 55-year-old former actor admits, during a break from duties as associate producer on his latest project, *Bright Lights, Big City*. "But in retrospect, I would much rather have played Jimmy Olsen. There is really no comparison. After all these years, who would still care if I had played those other parts?"

Protective of his privacy, Larson preferred to ignore the perennial popularity of his Jimmy Olsen persona. Not until an unexpected event in the mid-1970s –nearly 15 years after retiring from acting—did he truly perceive the value of his contribution to popular culture.

"I was visiting friends in France," he recounts. "I drove to Paris, to have lunch at a restaurant on the Left Bank. I walked past several sidewalk cafes, and the customers started carrying on. I didn't understand what was happening, but I was creating a sensation. By the time I reached my restaurant, I had attracted quite a crowd.

"While I was eating, a reporter from *Paris Match* came to my table. He asked, 'Did you know that *Superman* is the rage of Paris right now?' He told me that Henri Langlois was showing all 104 episodes, in consecutive order, at his famous Cinematheque Francaise—the heart of serious film culture in Paris.

"The reporter asked me for an interview, and naturally I declined. He said, 'But wouldn't you like to come to Cinematheque, and see how much the French people love *Superman*?' Like an ass, I told him, 'Yes, but I won't make a public ap-

pearance. It must be a *secret* visit.' That was neurotic behavior, but I was self-conscious for *years* about my identification with the series.

"They snuck me in, and it turned out to be one of the most *wonderful* experiences of my life. Langlois had gotten the prints from international distribution, and some of them had Arabic or Japanese subtitles. The audience was watching them as if they were art objects, and they were acclaiming Tommy Carr as a great *auteur* director.

"That was the first time I realized that *Superman* was being taken seriously, and was considered a classic. Of course, you must also realize—these are the same people who think *Jerry Lewis* is the greatest comic of our time."

All Superman Characters & Graphics Trademark & Copyright 1988 DC Comics Inc.

While Noel Neill was willing to cameo in *Superman: The Movie*, Larson denied the producers the chance to cash in on his name.

Despite foreign recognition, Larson's domestic reputation remained largely a mystery to TV fans unaware that his current work was being successfully presented in concert halls and opera houses across the country. Indeed, many people even believed that he had fallen on hard times, due to erroneous information supplied by a former *Superman* editor, the late Mort Weisinger.

"Mort was appearing on the college lecture circuit," Larson explains. "When people asked about me, he told them, 'Jack is a *box boy* at a Los Angeles supermarket.' I called [*Superman* producer] Whitney Ellsworth, and asked him, 'Why is Mort saying this about me?' Whit contacted Mort, and found out what happened.

"It turned out Mort had misunderstood Whit. Mort had previously asked Whit, 'Have you seen Jack lately?' Whit lived near me at the time, and we had recently run into each other at the local supermarket. So, Whit had answered, 'I last saw Jack in the supermarket.' Mort decided that meant I was *working* in the supermarket."

Understandably sensitive about his considerable artistic achievements, Larson declined an invitation from producers Alexander and Illya Salkind for an affectionate cameo appearance in *Superman: The Movie*. "They wanted to meet me, but I wouldn't see them," he reveals. "Then, as a favor to an agent, I was asked to meet with [director] Richard Donner. I agreed to have dinner with Donner, but I changed my mind at the last minute. I didn't want him to ask me to be in the film, because I would have said, 'Under *no* circumstances will I do it.'

"I didn't want to let them trade on my name. They were paying *millions* of dollars to other actors, but I knew they would only offer me something like $500 for a cameo. Why should I *give* them that? I would have regarded it as an insult—and I didn't want to be insulted."

Excluded from screenings of all four film adventures, Larson has only seen *Superman I* on television and *Superman III* theatrically, and has no intention of catching up with *Superman II* and *IV* on home video. Regardless of his disinterest, he generously praises the efforts of most of the regular cast members.

"I think Christopher Reeve [STARLOG #121, CSQ #1] is *terrific*," he declares. "Almost nobody can play Superman, but Reeve was marvelous in the part. The producers were so fortunate to have him. I offer him my applause and congratulations. Margot Kidder [STARLOG #120] was a different type of Lois Lane, but I thought she was very good. Marc McClure is a talented actor, but they didn't give him the opportunities as Jimmy Olsen that I was given. Unfortunately, Jackie Cooper was a blank spot for me as Perry White. Cooper is a fine actor, but John Hamilton is the *only* Perry White."

Acknowledging his predecessor's small screen legacy, Marc McClure (STARLOG #84) actually sought Larson's advice, once McClure was cast as Larson's cinematic counterpart. "Before Marc went off to shoot *Superman I*, he phoned up and wanted to meet me," Larson recalls. "I invited him to my house, and we talked. I

All Superman Photos Trademark & Copyright 1987 DC Comics Inc.

Lois Lane (Noel Neill) and Jimmy Olsen (Larson) are frozen in their tracks when mobsters put the big chill on the Man of Steel.

thought he was a very nice kid. I liked him, and I wished him well."

Inexplicably concerned by Larson's continuing notoriety, Warner Bros. adamantly refused to provide TV clips of his Jimmy Olsen performances, when he coincidentally appeared on the *The Today Show* during the same week that *Superman I* premiered in 1978. "I was very irritated with Warner Bros.," he complains. "NBC asked me to help them get the TV clips. Somebody from Warners called me while I was in a meeting at the Rockefeller Foundation in New York. Everybody at the meeting—including [New York Shakespeare Festival producer] Joseph Papp—heard the call on the speaker phone, and they couldn't believe how rude and insulting Warners' representative was to me.

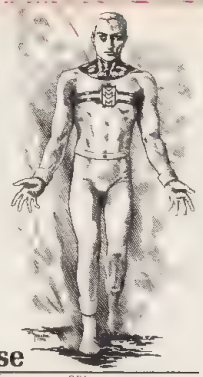
"The man said, 'Warner Bros. doesn't want you to appear on *The Today Show*.' I asked why. He told me, 'We don't want to confuse your tacky old TV series with our fine new product.' I said, 'But I'm committed to doing the show. Couldn't you send over one clip, just as a favor?' He said, 'Absolutely *not*. You will *never* appear with clips from the series. There will *never* be footage of you as Jimmy Olsen available again.'

"I asked, 'What if I'm hit by a New York cab and killed, and the news programs want clips? Do you mean that Warner Bros. won't provide clips to show that the poor guy who was run down in the street once played Jimmy Olsen?' He answered, 'That is *exactly* what I'm telling you. You will *never* be associated with *Superman* again.' It was unbelievable."

As an adolescent comic book fan, Larson was particularly fond of *Superman*'s four-color fantasies. Inevitably outgrowing his childhood hobby, he only recently rediscovered the Man of Steel in his latest incarnation. "Many years after I stopped reading comic books, I glanced through some Golden Age *Superman* issues, and they didn't look right," he muses. "They looked rather primitive, not at all like I recalled them. But John Byrne's version looks pretty good. It looks the way the Golden Age books *should* have looked. It looks like the *Superman* I remember."

Retaining warm memories of his hectic escapades at the *Daily Planet*, Jack Larson plans to one day write a book about his emotionally exhausting *Superman* experiences. Happily occupied with his present time-consuming activities, however, he has no immediate need to wallow in nostalgia.

"I've been asked to write a book several times, and have even been offered advances," he discloses, "but I'm not ready to write a book. You only do it once, and my life isn't over yet. I have other things to do. I have a very full life. My work keeps me busy. I can hardly find time to do what I *want* to do. Why should I do what I don't want to do? Some day I *will* write that book, but I'm saving it for later—*much* later." ■



To prevent the destruction of his own Earth, Miracleman must bring together the heroes of another.

Eclipse

(continued from page 32)

"I had wanted to find a way to let the original writers benefit from this project. I suggested that the individual writers write a portion of the book so that readers can see what the characters are like where done by the actual creative teams," Wolfman explains. "I can only write characters to the extent that I'm capable of mimicking another writer's style. It's much better for the actual writer to write his own characters. Fred and I went over the plot to find the appropriate places where these parts can fit in." The first interlude involves the Prowler and apparently meshes well with the main story.

Like many other company-wide series, *Total Eclipse* will serve as a springboard for new titles. "What Marv has already written on Zzed makes him good enough for his own book," comments Burke.

"I'll probably be creating part of that series, but plans are for Len Wein to script it," Wolfman details. "As for other projects, it all depends on time once again. I would like to continue working for Eclipse. I like the people and the characters, but it all has to do with time, not inclination."

Also planned to follow *Total Eclipse* is *Double Danger*, a new book featuring the Liberty Project and a new Kurt Busiek character named Blackjack. "He's so bizarre and unique! He's the thematic flip-side of the Liberty Project, the two sides of the coin of Kurt Busiek," remarks Burke, also the editor of *DD*. "The title change comes in the fine tuning of the creative team and the book's pseudo-anthology format." If plans go as desired, there will also be a new *New Wave* joining Eclipse.

Changes made in *Total Eclipse* may not last forever. Wolfman is quick to point out that since most of the characters are owned by different creators, it will be up to those creators to handle the after-effects.

"If people accept *Total Eclipse* as a good, enjoyable story, then that'll be great!" says Marv Wolfman. "It may get you to realize that you don't have to buy that *fourth* copy of *X-Men*, and instead, you'll buy *Prowler* or *Zot!* or any other independent title." ■

Crossroads

(continued from page 35)

Even though he's from a different reality, the Merk has this vision of Dreadstar, who is the greatest mass murderer of all time—he vaporized the entire Milky Way! So, the Merk has to send Nexus out to kill Dreadstar! The real problem is that Nexus always gets his man. Nexus has never not gotten his man!"

Oliver says his round-robin team-up mini-series has lived up to the second of his initial goals. "Many artists will jump at the chance to have, really, complete artistic control over their work. This format is great for people like Shawn McManus, who is pencilling, inking and coloring issue #4, and Cynthia Martin."

Artist on the initial Whisper/Sable issue, Martin says she had always liked Whisper, so it was fun to use the character with Sable. Steven Grant, writer of the first issue, used one of Martin's suggestions to provide a variety of locations.

"Fortunately, I was able to do some ballet stuff. I'm a ballet freak," says Martin. "When I was talking with Steve, we managed to shuffle it around and make that one of the story's motifs. I got to draw some dancers and backstage stuff.

"It was also supposed to have a Raymond Chandler-esque feel, so I got to draw Los Angeles in its more seedy form—Chandler *is* Los Angeles! That was the best part, because I'm from California, and I got to do some locales that I wouldn't ordinarily have been able to do in the story."

Martin adds that she felt grateful to First for their tolerance. While she was drawing the 46-page story, she had her wisdom teeth out, nearly broke her arm, and was robbed. "First was so patient. Every time something else happened to delay me, they would just say, 'That's OK.' They're all wearing little halos!"

At present, *Crossroads* seems to be the last time First's heroes will be meeting like this, even though the series establishes that such a continuity is possible. Mike Baron, for one, cringes at the suggestion of a "First universe."

"Let's just ignore that," he laughs, wincing slightly. "As far as I'm concerned, this is just an opportunity to tell more extravagant, deeper, and richer stories. As far as the publisher is concerned, it's an opportunity to market the books more widely and attract new readers. I know art is always fighting with commerce up to a point, but when I hear terms like the 'First universe,' I shudder."

Emphasizing the one-time-only nature of *Crossroads*, however, First Comics editor Rick Oliver is more succinct.

"Let me put it this way," he laughs. "I won't attempt to do it again!" ■

Miracleman Art By & Copyright 1988 John Totleben/Trademark Eclipse Enterprises, Inc. Alan Moore

Bullets, "The Badger" and Baron

Punisher Art: Whilce Portacio & Scott Williams
Copyright 1990 & Trademark Marvel Entertainment Group

In addition to the Punisher's monthly world war on crime, fans can expect to see more mayhem in his upcoming graphic novel.

Conquering the world of American comic books isn't enough for the prolific Mike Baron. In addition to scripting the adventures of Deadman, the Punisher, the Sonic Disruptors, Ginger Fox, the Flash, Corum, and of course Nexus and the Badger, the busiest comics writer in Madison, Wisconsin is looking to the East—the Far East.

After re-shuffling his current workload (and finishing his runs on *The Flash* and *Chronicles of Corum*), the DC, First, Comico and Marvel Comics scribe is overseeing the introduction of Hong Kong's Jademan Comics line to North America.

Jademan—which will publish four regular kung fu titles following the *Jademan Kung Fu Special*—has hired longtime fan Baron to do the final scripts for the American versions. The writer says he will be working from rough translations of the original Chinese stories.

"The English scripts that are prepared in Hong Kong capture the gist of the story, but they lose a great deal in the translation, and sometimes they're unintentionally funny. So, instead of appearing with a half-way translation, they want to key it right in. They want the language up-to-date, they want the story to live and breathe, so that's what I'll try to do. I want to give these stories scripts that *Americans* can relate to," Baron says.

He explains that he first discovered the Jademan line of comics—founded in 1971 in Hong Kong by Tony Wong—about six years ago, and began picking them up wherever he could find them. "When I saw these comics, my jaw just hit the floor, in terms of the artwork."

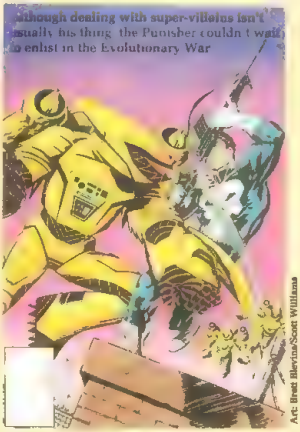
A longtime martial arts aficionado, Baron admits he was also attracted by the kung fu storylines. "These comics are not realistic, but they are fun. We'll let the public judge. I got involved when Tony Wong flew most of the major American distributors over there to talk about them invading the American market. I was recommended to Jademan, and that's how I got the gig."

To explain the storyline in a typical issue, Baron grabs one of the original Chinese comics at random and pages through it as he speaks. "This consists of what looks like 22 pages of wall-to-wall mayhem. It begins in the *middle* of a fight, and escalates all the way through. We have lots of esoteric techniques here—the Dragon Stamp, we have One-Finger Kung, Lightning Stomps, the Tiger Claw—and they're all elaborately shown with the most spectacular colors and special effects I've ever seen! This stuff makes Jack Kirby look like confetti!

"As far as the story goes, I gather there's a grudge match going on between these two fellows for some reason or another," he laughs. "On the very last page here, the one guy is a whirling dervish, surrounded by a hurricane, and he's literally stomping another one into the earth, while rocks and soil heave up around him like a tornado!

"As to what's happening here, I can only guess. But I'll bet my guess would be accurate if I said there was a young hero with a grudge against a bad guy who had either raped the hero's girl friend or killed his family. These comics are very similar to kung fu movies, and that's what most of the movies are about."

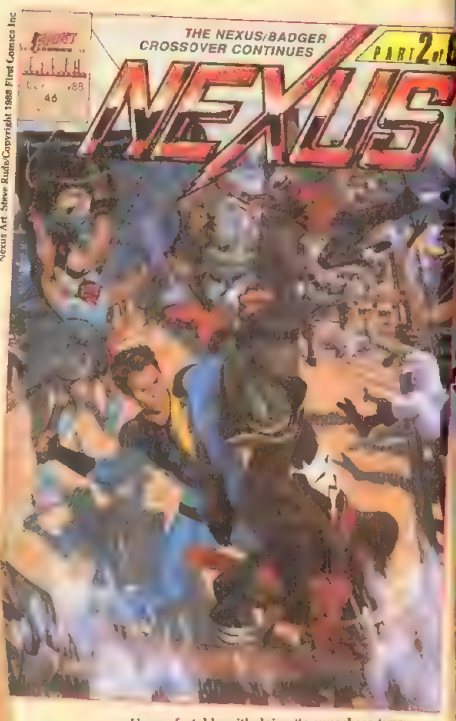
Of the four initial Jademan titles—*Oriental Heroes*, *The Blood Sword*,


Although dealing with super-villains isn't usually his thing, the Punisher couldn't wait to enlist in the Evolutionary War

Art: Brett Blevins/Scott Williams

Art: Courtesy Jademan Comics

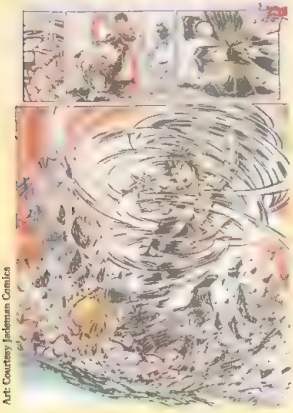
"When I saw these comics, my jaw hit the floor," says Baron.



Nexus Art: Steve Rude/Copyright 1988 First Comics Inc

Uncomfortable with doing "a superhero-type character," Baron and Steve Rude created Nexus instead.

"I gather there's a grudge match going on between these two fellows," Baron notes.



Art: Courtesy Jademan Comics

The Force of Buddha's Palm and *Drunken Fist*, Baron says he'll probably be writing *Drunken Fist* and one other, while Roger (*Crossroads*) Salick will pen the other two. Although Jademan has indicated that they intend to expand their line with other genres of comics, Baron doesn't plan to increase his involvement further.

"I'm doing this for fun and because I like the books," he explains. "I'm really stretched to the max right now, and I want to continue with my own characters."

Meanwhile, *Sonic Disruptors*, one of Baron's more acclaimed and controversial titles, is building toward the end of its 12-part run for DC.

"When I write *Sonic Disruptors*, I try to put myself back into the head of a 17-year-old, which is unfortunately all too easy to do," he laughs. "We're building up to a rock & roll revolution in the streets. I wish we could have a soundtrack. That's the only thing that's missing, but I'm trying to provide that by mentioning so many works throughout."

The flip side of drug tolerance is shown in a new *Punisher* graphic novel for Marvel, which Baron has scripted in addition to regularly writing the comic.

"Bill Reinhold will illustrate the graphic novel, and it is a mother! This one is excruciating! It involves a group of DEA officials who have hooked up with a right-wing Korean businessman to create their own anti-drug strike force. Unfortunately, they begin by hitting the wrong house and killing a bunch of innocent people.

"The Punisher knows this because he's watching the house next door, which is the house they were supposed to hit. Occasionally, we hear about this in the news, where some SWAT squad gets the wrong address and goes in and terrorizes an innocent family—that's the premise. So, the Punisher goes after this organization, which has a super-secret headquarters on top of a butte in the Utah desert. This butte is almost like an aircraft carrier, only it's stationary, so it involves heavy aerial warfare."

Following the multi-part Badger/Nexus crossover that culminates in *Nexus* #50, Baron says there will be some major

Where do you let a six-foot tall, lunatic Badger with a penchant for violence go? Anywhere he wants.

changes coming up with both books, particularly *Nexus*. "This fall, we're launching a *Nexus* spin-off—a four-issue miniseries that Steve Rude will draw. This will be about the *new* Nexus, the one who takes over when the original Nexus quits in disgust in #51. The regular *Nexus* title will keep running, but Horatio Hellpop will no longer be Nexus.

"We also have plans, perhaps for next spring, to do a four-issue *Badger* spin-off mini-series that would be set in the South Pacific, with a couple of episodes in Australia. I've been in contact with an Australian artist who I definitely want to do this material. The guy is a genius, and First is all for it. The only problem is, I have to find time to write the series. I expect I'll be able to do that this summer.

"What's the Badger going to do Down Under? He doesn't need an excuse to go anywhere, he just shows up. It's a very existential book in a way. That's why there's so little explanation for so many of the silly things that happen. But, he'll end up in Australia, I believe Kid Kang will reappear, and I have a couple of formidable martial arts marsupials which I may introduce," Baron laughs. "It'll be the usual tough, crazy action. He may get involved with Thai pirates up in the Northwest Frontier, maybe some big alligators."

Nexus and *Badger* were originally created for Capital Comics, and they remain Baron's two favorite characters. "It's a toss-up. Sometimes *Nexus* is my favorite, sometimes it's *Badger*. Right now, it's definitely *Nexus* because Badger is appearing in it!"

Copyright 1988 & Trademark DC Comics Inc.
Sonic Disruptors Art Barry Crain/John Nyberg
SONIC DISRUPTORS
FLASH
Flash Art Mike Collins & Larry Mahlstedt/Copyright 1987 & Trademark DC Comics Inc.

DC may have let him run rampant, but Baron says he just couldn't build up a satisfactory momentum on *Flash*.

Notes Baron, a soundtrack is "the only thing that's missing" from *Sonic Disruptors*.

Despite the lengthy runs of the two books, approaching 50 issues of *Nexus*, Baron says they're still a joy to write. "The characters in *Nexus* are alive, to both me and the Dude [Steve Rude]. Just as life is continuously interesting, and one doesn't get bored and say, 'I've seen it all and done it all,' these characters' lives are continuously interesting to us. They keep surprising us. We keep going back to the seeds of what we planted in 1981, and it just keeps flourishing! I've never been more excited about the title."

Although he says he only works 40 hours a week, Mike Baron is frighteningly prolific. "I don't know how I do it, I only know I'm getting it done. I wake up in the morning, exhausted, and there are reams of written paper there. . . '

With the crush of work, something had to give, and for Baron, it was writing *The Flash*. After DC killed off the Barry Allen Flash in the *Crisis on Infinite Earths* miniseries, Baron was given the nod to revitalize the series with Wally West—formerly Kid Flash under the familiar red cowl. During his just-over-a-year's tenure on the book, Baron's Flash had his powers reduced, won the lottery, discovered his own father was a Manhunter, and began a controversial affair with a married woman.

Although Baron says DC gave him complete freedom in developing the character, he still wasn't satisfied with his own work. "I would have liked to have had the luxury to build that character up the way I had built up Nexus. But, I don't know what I would have done differently.

"I was unhappy with the writing, it was unsatisfying. I wish I could be consistent, and love everything that I write equally, but I don't. To me, it varies wildly. I shouldn't pass judgment on my own work, but I found the writing unsatisfying, and felt that if I continued, I might damage the character. So, I looked around for something else that I could be happier with."

Baron's writing has caused controversy in the past—with such aspects as Flash's affair, and the drug use accepted as part of the world of the *Sonic Disruptors* sparking criticism—but the most recent example has him outraged: The conviction on obscenity charges of an employee of Friendly Frank's Comics south of Chicago. *Corum* was one of the obscene books cited during the trial. He says such attempts at repression will *never* affect his writing.

"Of course it can't. Look at *Sonic Disruptors*! That's just like sticking my head up to take a shot. It worked, too! It bothers me, but I can't let it affect my writing. If I start doing that, I might as well get out.

"On the one hand, everything that happens affects my writing. On the other, it's my job not to let prevailing community standards affect my writing—unless that's my goal as a writer. But," says Mike Baron, "every writer worth their salt is going *against* prevailing community standards!" ■

Rent-A-Rex
TRANSYLVANIA

To hear Charles Darwin tell it, one would think that dinosaurs have been extinct for more than 64 million years. One day, these reticent reptiles were the undisputed kings of the primordial jungle. The next morning, and a several hundred-degree drop in the weather later, the entire race woke to discover they were fossils of their former selves.

According to Tom Mason's Theory of Dinosaur Resurgence, however, these animals of eons past have enjoyed a longevity unequalled by any other race since the dawn of time. Mason's theory states: "Every 20 years or so, the public's natural affinity for dinosaurs propels these prehistoric personalities to the forefront of pop culture."

Admittedly more of an artisan than a paleontologist, Tom Mason is the creator and writer of Eternity Comics' newest and easily most offbeat title, *Dinosaurs for Hire*. Aided and abetted by penciller Bryon Carson, Mason's continuing bi-monthly series adds a decidedly different twist to the dinosaur-as-protagonist.

"Don't be fooled by their fancy clothes or intimidated by their automatic weaponry," warns Mason, referring to Archie, Lorenzo and Reese, the three equally billed stars of *Dinosaurs*. "Although they look and act like typical gun-toting, beer-drinking, womanizing dinosaurs from our own past, these guys are actually Rambosaurs from outer space.

"Whereas Earth dinosaurs were generally believed to be warm-blooded herbivores, when these three take on a case as freelance operatives for the United States government, they're blatantly carnivorous. These lizards are out for blood!" exclaims Mason.

How these alien adventurers made it through the rigors of deep space to land in New York City's fast lane is the cause of much speculation. Although several clues were alluded to in the March-released premiere issue, the answers to such mysteries as the team's perfect English or their even more mysterious additional opposable thumbs, will be a long time coming.

Art: Byron Carson/Alex Lorenzo & Mike Roberts

Archie is described as "the calm, logical leader of the group."

"I *hate* origin stories," he explains seriously. "It's better to let the character's background unfold naturally over the course of several issues instead of throwing everything at the readers all at once."

So far, however, this much has been revealed. Archie, Lorenzo and Reese have been on Earth for more than two years.

"When they first landed, the guys presented themselves and their services to the United States government," says Mason. "They were immediately given honorary status as freelance 'undercover' operatives for an 'unidentified peacekeeping organization.' *Glasnost* notwithstanding, the U.S. felt they would rather employ the dinosaurs on America's behalf rather than risk meeting the guys later during a trip to Moscow."

Because it is often a long period between assignments requiring the trio's special talents (carnage, mayhem, the inadvertent destruction of huge chunks of real estate, etc.), the three spend much of their time lizard-lounging around. While they all enjoy getting together over a beer, they often indulge in their own distractions from the boring lifestyle of a dinosaur trapped on Earth.

"Archie is the calm, logical leader of the group," explains Mason in regards to the tyrannosaurus rex (which, appropriately, translates to "King of the Tyrant Lizards"). Always the gentleman, he amuses himself by engaging in monogamous relations with a disposable android woman—one in a series. "Archie would probably love to date a 'real woman,' but he understands Earth females aren't anatomically compatible with dinosaurs, alien or otherwise. Besides, where would he find a woman sensitive enough to see past the dry, green-scaled skin and two-ton weight difference?"

Although Mason denies having developed a favorite character, his voice betrays an obvious fondness for the sophisticated and charming triceratops, Lorenzo. "He has a penchant for Chinese silk robes and adding to his CD collection of Wagnerian operas. Let the other guys go

CAN'T YOU MAKE IT GROW BACK AS A CLAW OR A HOOK? THAT COULD REALLY COME IN HANDY!
KESPEAL REFLNOMEX DISPERSER
VERY FUNNY! NOW SHUT UP AND WATCH
WOW
KESPEAL REFLNOMEX DISPERSER
GREAT WORK, PROF. NOW FIND US SOMETHING TO PUNCH.
Art: Byron Carson/Jim Dever

Reese's minor flesh wound gets better, thanks to Professor Tyrell's serum.

Art: Scott Blaser/Scott Hanna
Dinosaurs for Hire: Trademark & Copyright 1988 Tom Mason. Artwork Copyright 1988 Byron Carson

Professor Lindsay Tyrell makes sure the boys keep healthy and well-armed.

chase down human criminals, Lorenzo would rather sip wine from a glass while curled up in front of the fireplace with an original copy of *Great Expectations*."

"Uncontrollable" is the word that comes to Mason when describing Reese, the near-maniacal stegosaurus complete with requisite eye patch. "He's like that old joke about 'Where does a 300-pound gorilla sit?' Reese has a tendency to go where he wants, when he wants, and to do what he wants when he gets there!"

While these fun-loving dinosaurs view humans as "little more than ants along on a picnic," Mason is quick to point out that they aren't without friends on Earth.

"Professor Lindsay Tyrell, the only human who has any real control over them, is their maternal figure," Mason reveals. The group's government "baby sitter," she uses her official position to study the dinosaurs while keeping them in a constant supply of automatons. "Her genius also allows her to create serums and whatnot to help the dinosaurs' natural regenerative process.

"Another close personal friend of the big three is their maintenance man, Red. He's basically as short as the dinosaurs are tall.

"Not as high on their list of best friends are Smith and Jones, the two government agents assigned to keep the guys in check when the dinosaurs are on an occasional field operation," Mason explains. "These two don't actually dislike Archie, Lorenzo and Reese. They're just not overly fond of counting on partners who have a brain the size of a walnut."

What type of problems prompt the Justice Department to call for the assistance of its alien operatives? On loan to Scotland Yard at the opening of the second issue titled "Vampires and Englishmen" (released on the direct sales market this month), Archie is asked to investigate a series of gruesome vampire murders that lead to the Lord of the Undead.

"When Dracula meets up with Archie, he's angry at being blamed for murders committed by an 'obvious group of amateur bloodsuckers,' " says Mason, explaining how the two team up to solve the mystery. "In a parallel development, Lorenzo and Reese are kidnapped by KGB agents in order to allow a faction of renegade Russian scientists to create an army of dinosaurs to supplement their country's dwindling nuclear stockpile.

"These KGB agents are in competition with their own countrymen, who have already created an army of vampire soldiers," the same ones who have been causing so much flak for Dracula. "So, Dr. Tyrell, Red, and Agents Smith and Jones rush to Russia and free the guys. Without giving away the ending, by the conclusion of issue #3 ["Vampire Heaven"], one of the supporting cast is revealed as a traitor. Any future appearances by this character will have to be done on the service end of a spatula!"

When not guarding a subplot or alluding to coming developments, Mason talks openly regarding his affection for dinosaurs in general and Archie, Lorenzo and Reese in particular.

"Dinosaurs are great!" he exclaims. "I love them! *Everybody* loves them! Dave Olbrich [Eternity's publisher] and I have been actively searching for a dinosaur book since the company's early days" (i.e. spring 1986). While this growing company was issuing such titles as the successful *Ex-Mutants* and the increasingly popular *Trouble With Girls*, Creative Director Mason was contemplating the importance of dinosaurs in today's society.

"I think it's Freudian," he pronounces at last. "People are attracted to these creatures because as fierce and powerful and destructive as these 'monsters' are, we can stand up to them because they've been *dead* for millions of years!"

The question of a noticeable lack of a female dinosaur, perhaps an allosaurus or a fetching young ornithomimus, prompts Mason to explain that "there's no deep meaning behind the omission of a female dinosaur. I'm afraid she would soften the guys up. This isn't *Moonlighting*.

"It's a fun comic book! *Don't* expect to see these guys back biting, or whining, or complaining about their lot in life! They're here for a good time!"

So then, readers shouldn't count on an issue where Archie stops a suicide victim, Lorenzo teaches a child to read, or Reese lobbies on behalf of the homeless?

"Absolutely not!" vows Tom Mason, adding with a smile, "I can promise you that *Dinosaurs for Hire* will have *no social relevance at all.*" ■

Lorenzo is a sophisticatedsaurus, craving fine wines, good music and excellent literature.

Art: Byron Carson/Jim Dever

Arousing ALIENS

By ERIC NIDEROST

Soon, the Queen Mother may be starring in a series of *ALIENS* adventures.

All ALIENS Art By & Courtesy Mark A. Nelson Dark Horse Comics

In space, no one can hear you scream, but SF movie fans let out a howl of delight when the long-awaited sequel to 1979's *ALIEN* finally hit the screen. Like its predecessor, *ALIENS* was a runaway hit, sparking reports of a possible third installment of the terrifying tale. Trouble is, feature films can take years to produce.

So, *ALIENS* fans had reason to celebrate with the publication of an *ALIENS* comic book. Produced by Dark Horse Comics, licensed by 20th Century Fox, the series (six issues in all) may help keep public enthusiasm for *ALIEN* at a fever pitch. The bi-monthly, black-and-white comic is scripted by Mark Verheiden, a man renowned in comic circles for his action/adventure *The American*, and the visuals are being handled by Mark A. Nelson.

When Dark Horse contacted Verheiden to see if he was interested in the *ALIENS* project, the scribe jumped at the chance. "I like writing about something set in the future," he explains in measured tones that belie an undercurrent of excitement in his voice, "as well as something that's scary. Comics can be much more cerebral than movies. They allow you to get *inside* a character's head to see what kind of nasty, creepy things he or she is thinking about. That's the kind of thing I'll get to do with *ALIENS*.

"Mine is a self-contained story," the writer declares, "with an all-new separate storyline. The third *ALIEN* movie and the comic are entirely *unrelated*, and I want to keep it that way. I want to make the comic mini-series complete unto itself and successful unto itself, whatever the fate of the third film. To begin with," Verheiden relates, "my story begins 10 or 12 years *after* the last movie. True, some things carry over from the film, but, in general, I'm not going to explain the *ALIENS* universe or any apparent information gaps in the movies. If *ALIEN III* takes place, the movie guys can do that!"

Not that Verheiden has completely severed the "umbilical cord" that links his comic to its celluloid predecessors. Far from it. In fact, two movie characters, Corporal Hicks (played by Michael Biehn in *ALIENS*) and Newt (Carrie Henn) are the "pivotal figures" of the comic tales.

"Newt is now a young woman of 18," Verheiden elaborates, "and Hicks is still in the Marines and still badly burned from *ALIENS*. The series will delve into what happened to him after he returned to Earth and how he feels about it. You see, there's a kind of disease analogy here. He was splattered with Alien blood, and so people are kind of afraid of him. He doesn't have an Alien inside, of course, and people realize that. Still, they know the process, know how the Aliens conceal themselves in human bodies and burst out. Somehow, it makes them reluctant to get near him."

Since Dark Horse has already divulged the thrust of the *ALIENS* comic storyline, Verheiden elects to flesh out a few more details. "It's no secret," he acknowledges, "that the comic will visit the Aliens' home world. We will have Marines land on that planet and engage in a big battle with the creatures. But during the course of this battle, some surprises will be revealed that I don't want to discuss."

But won't new confrontations with the Aliens evoke unpleasant memories for the two protagonists? "Well," Verheiden hedges, "it's true that Hicks is pretty screwed up because of his experiences on Archeron. Newt is having problems, too, but at least *she* came out physically intact."

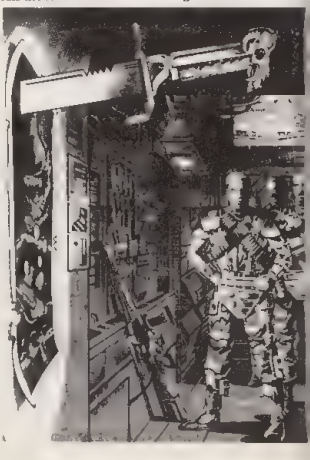
Whatever happens on the Aliens home world, the Marines will have to do without the services of the stalwart Ripley (portrayed in both films by Sigourney Weaver). *Probably*. As things stand now, Ripley will be a "minor, minor background presence."

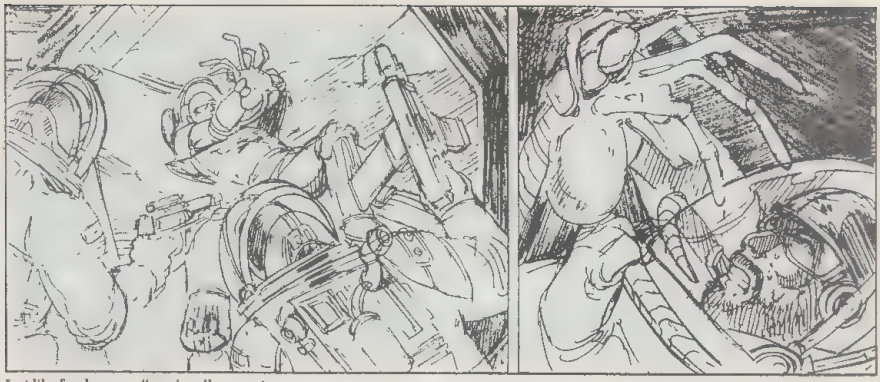
Verheiden conceives the Alien home planet as ruled by a supreme Queen, a creature whose authority would eclipse all others—even the one Ripley battled in *ALIENS*. The author envisions a kind of Alien hierarchy in which there may be subordinate queens on other worlds, but the "Alien Empress" retains supreme power. As supreme ruler, she would call the shots for all Aliens, using some kind of telepathic power to issue orders to Alien outposts throughout the universe.

"What I would like to do," Verheiden confides, "is to do an issue from the point-of-view of the Aliens! We would get inside the head of the Queen Mother, and see things from her perspective—how she feels about all these Marines trampling about her domain and stomping her. Now, *that's* going to be a wild issue!"

It seems the Aliens are going to return the favor and visit Earth, which brings Verheiden to an interesting sub-plot. "I'm surmising a future in which the power of television has diminished somewhat.

All the Aliens need are a few good men.





All ALIENS Art Copyright 1989 20th Century Fox. All Rights Reserved.

Just like facehuggers, "comics allow you to get inside a character's head," says Mark Verheiden.

Commercial TV has disappeared, only to be replaced by varieties of religious programming. One channel features a guy named Savaje. The man is plainly nuts. He has an idea that there are Aliens out there in the void, and that these Aliens are the equivalent of a Messiah. To promote his beliefs, he's trying to gain a following through his TV show."

It's not that Savaje has any inside information; in fact, according to Verheiden, knowledge of the Aliens has been kept from the general public. Although some people know, the great mass of humanity have no inkling of what's out there. When the Aliens begin to land on Earth, Savaje's reaction to them forms a major plot device.

Artist Mark A. Nelson shares Verheiden's enthusiasm for *ALIENS*. A gifted craftsman, Nelson says he likes to draw exotic beings. "It was *great* to be offered a chance to do an *ALIENS* comic," Nelson exclaims. "I call it my 'dream book' because I liked the two films and because I'm very big on drawing all sorts of organic shapes and sizes."

Nelson hopes to re-create the mood of the *ALIENS* films, an atmosphere of tension and foreboding. There's a kind of brooding texture to Nelson's work that lends itself to this kind of presentation. He likes to play with light and shadow, creating a distinct *chiaroscuro* effect with each succeeding panel. Besides, Nelson likes weird creatures. "Dinosaurs are a favorite of mine," the artist observes, "and are featured in much of my work. The Aliens are sort of reptilian.

(continued on page 66)

Proud to Write "The American"

When he isn't concerned with matters *ALIEN*, Mark Verheiden is working on *The American*. And he's immensely pleased with the reception given to this Dark Horse Comic. The title character is basically a costumed hero who travels around the world "fighting the good fight" while risking his life on various missions. He seems well-nigh indestructible, the cult idol of millions. But, the cloak of secrecy is rudely ripped off the entire operation, showing the American to be only one part of an elite 300-man Marine commando team trained for suicide missions around the world. About 250 of these "superheroes" have already been killed.

The scandal occurs when it is revealed, as Verheiden notes, "that the U.S. government let the people think there was only one hero when there were really 300. I'm having a series of 'Ollie North'-style Congressional hearings that will reveal the whole sordid tale." The author adds that future stories will feature an American—now truly pared down to one individual—and a cynical reporter who chronicles the hero's adventures.

Verheiden is "surprised, really surprised" at *The American*'s popularity, but happy, too. He says he tried to inject some subtleties into *American* scripts, things that went deeper than formula

American Art Chris Warner/Copyright Mark Verheiden

Only someone who wasn't a real American would dare to keep these men from reaching the small screen.

action/adventure. "*The American*," he details, "is basically a cynical but funny story about heroes and how they are perceived in America. When people first see the comic's cover, they think 'What is this? Some kind of stupid Rambo clone?' But when they *read* it, they see it's about conscience, the morality of doing things."

The American has been optioned as a TV movie or possibly even a continuing live-action series. Verheiden may have something to do with writing the screenplay(s), but things are too up in the air right now to elicit further comment.

His basic background is in film, not comics, and like others, Verheiden had a bad experience in Hollywood. He worked long and hard on the movie *Terror Squad*, only to be removed from the project's final stages. Extensively rewritten, this Chuck Connors starrer went directly to video. Verheiden calls the movie "someone's unique idea of entertainment" in a voice loaded with irony.

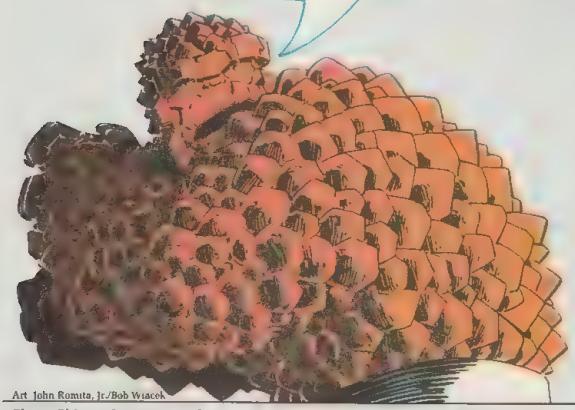
Nevertheless, Mark Verheiden regards the optioning of *The American* as a bridge to future film projects. "I've been developing some things with a partner," he reveals, "and we're both committed to low-budget filmmaking. After I'm done with *ALIENS*, maybe we'll be able to put something together later this summer."

—Eric Niderost

Hold Onto Your Seats!

"Marvel Comics Presents" a manic medley of slam-bang serials on a frantic, fortnightly frequency.

By DANIEL DICKHOLTZ



Art: John Romita, Jr./Bob Wiacek

Shang-Chi attacks! Thing on the run! What's next? Find out in a fortnight!

Art: Walt Simonson

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Off in the shadows, deep in his lair, an evil genius cackles. Behind him, surrounded by the most advanced technology man has ever seen, a girl lies helpless on an operating table. Meanwhile, leaping over trapdoors and dodging sizzling lasers, our hero charges down a hallway towards the villain's last stronghold. Just as a claw-like hand closes on a dial despite the girl's pleading screams, the door explodes into a million splinters. But, before the gallant gladiator can take another step, the master criminal's minions spring from their hiding places, surrounding the would-be savior. Guns are pulled, knives flash. Suddenly, everything goes black. There's only one thing for everyone to do—come back next week.

"I love that kind of stuff!" exclaims editor Terry Kavanagh, which is why the same thrills that seemingly perished with those old Saturday afternoon movie serials will live again in the new bi-weekly *Marvel Comics Presents*.

"For a long time, we had shied away from that sort of approach, so I really like the idea that we're doing a comic book this way. It would have been tougher to do on a monthly basis, but with a bi-weekly, we can do it. Readers are getting the material every two weeks, so we can keep the momentum going on stories. There will also be one-shot, self-contained stories but the rest of them are pretty much cliff-hangers."

Flung together from the farthest reaches of the Marvel universe, a current star, a couple of old favorites and a new villain are the first to find themselves in the thick of the fast, frenzied action.

"Wolverine" by Chris Claremont, Klaus Jason (CSQ #2) and John Buscema, Kavanagh explains, "is basically Wolverine unleashed. It's Wolverine away from the X-Men, doing things he couldn't necessarily do with them because he wouldn't really get team approval. This is going to be the Wolverine that people have been waiting to see."

In the case of "Master of Kung Fu," which reunites Shang-Chi, heroic son of Fu Manchu, with his longtime scripter Doug Moench and introduces him to artist Tom Grindberg, "what we'll be seeing is an update. We'll find out where he has been for the last few years and what he has been doing. By that serial's end, Shang-Chi has a completely new status quo. It's a possible lead-in to a new ongoing series that would be very different from the last one. It's hard to describe without giving too much away."

However, Kavanagh notes that the Steve Gerber-Tom Sutton "Man-Thing series is basically done the same way Man-Thing used to be done: He's a catalyst for events in the stories, but he isn't necessarily the main star. This is sort of an Iran-Contra story, which sounds strange but that's exactly what it is. It has satanism and Congressional hearings. Steve Gerber has come up with an in-

teresting approach to tell a story that you wouldn't think had anything to do with Man-Thing, but it definitely does."

Unlike the other premiere features in *Marvel Comics Presents*, though, "The Fear Worm" episodes can be read fairly independently of one another. "He is a new villain, created by Al Milgrom, who is an alien being that feeds on fear," the editor reports, adding that the character will appear "in four consecutive stories that Al is writing and drawing. In the first, he will meet the Silver Surfer, the second, Captain America, the third, the Thing, and the fourth, Thor. These characters all tend to have relatively unique fears, which he views as delicacies, and he progressively works his way through them."

Readers who progressively work their way through each issue of *Marvel Comics Presents*, notes Kavanagh, can usually expect the unexpected. It's basically anything goes," he admits. "Every issue is going to have something for everybody. There will be horror stories, some issues will have Westerns. *Every* genre is going to be covered in this book."

This means, of course, that nearly every character the company has ever produced will eventually be seen in *Marvel Comics Presents*. Already, Kavanagh has a number of diverse features on tap.

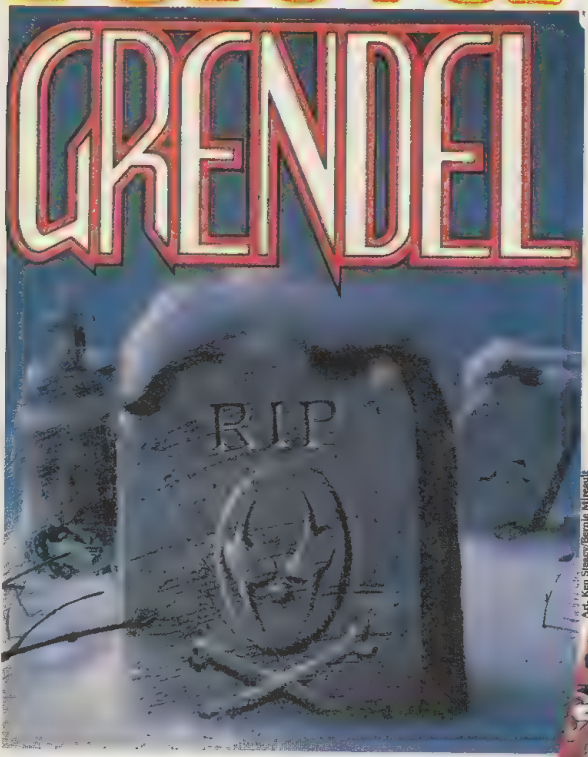
"After 'Wolverine,' the next lead

(continued on page 60)

Man-thing Art Jim Sutton

Whatever knows fear will have to wait two weeks before it burns at Man-Thing's touch.

Forever GRENDEL



Grendel Art Trademark & Copyright 1986, 1987, 1988 Matt Wagner/Comico

Art: Ken Steacy/Bernie Mireault

Don't let this scene fool you. Grendel is just waiting for a new character to inhabit.

By DAN SMEDDY

Pursued by his eternal nemesis, Matt Wagner retreats behind the magic of "Mage."

Is *Grendel* the tale of a criminal genius' rampage or is it the story of a 21st century mother's revenge against a Japanese vampire or is it instead a disturbed theater person's brief killing spree? It's all of those and more, according to its creator, writer/aritist Matt Wagner.

Whenever he is asked to describe his popular series, though, his answer is always the same. "I like to call it 'fantastic literature.' It's a description that I find covers all the genres, horror, crime, SF and even psychological thrillers."

The original *Grendel* chronicled the tale of Hunter Rose, a world-renowned author by day and an eternal fighter for evil by night; it was first introduced in a 10-page story that appeared in a black and white anthology, *Comico Primer* #2. The fan reaction was so good that Comico wanted Wagner to create more stories about the character. That request resulted in a three-issue black & white series.

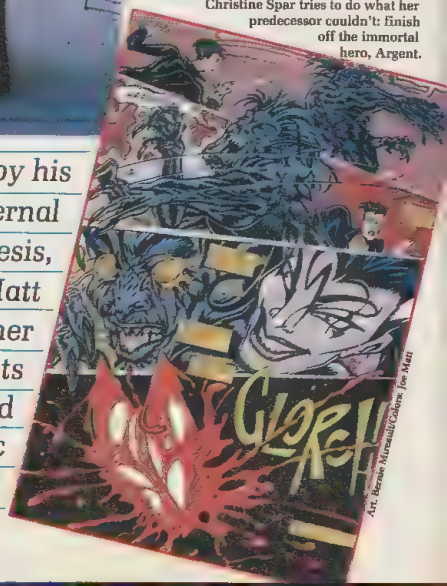
Why "Grendel?" "It sounded good!" laughs Wagner. "Grendel is the name of the creature that Beowulf fought. It's one of the oldest legends of Western mythology, and mythology is the one thing I'm a big fan of."

Immediately after finishing *Grendel*, Wagner started to write, draw, ink and color *Mage*, another classic of visual storytelling. During the release of the first issues of *Mage*, Comico requested even more *Grendel* stories. "Originally, it was just going to be the three issues," says Wagner, "although I did feel the series never really finished telling the story. It only scratched the surface."

The success of *Mage* gave Wagner the opportunity to bring *Grendel* back. "Starting with *Mage* #6, a fuller more elaborate retelling of the Hunter Rose-Grendel stories was published as a four-page back-up," Wagner relates. "That ran straight through to *Mage* #14. I told it from a journalist's point-of-view and decorated the text with full page art deco illustrations."

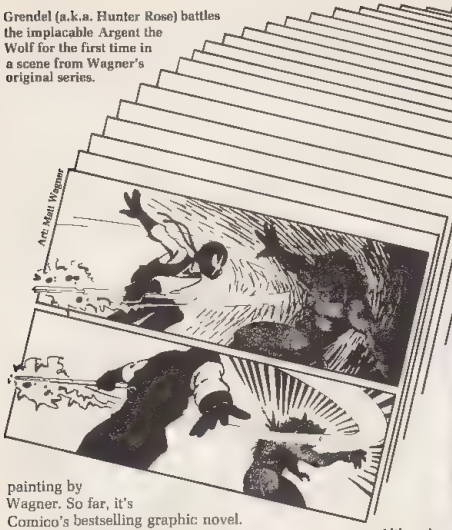
Although *Mage* sold well, issues including the *Grendel* back-up sold the most. Both Wagner and Comico were flooded with mail from fans asking for *Grendel* to be reprinted in full. The back-up pages were compiled and released as *Grendel: Devil by the Deed*, a graphic novel with a new wrap-around cover

Overwhelmed by the demonic Grendel force, Christine Spar tries to do what her predecessor couldn't: finish off the immortal hero, Argent.



Art: Bernie Mireault/Colors: Joe Matt

Grendel (a.k.a. Hunter Rose) battles the implacable Argent the Wolf for the first time in a scene from Wagner's original series.



painting by Wagner. So far, it's Comico's bestselling graphic novel.

"Comico then asked me if I wanted to expand *Grendel* any further!" exclaims Wagner. "I knew from the beginning that *Grendel* could keep going, and since I had more stories to tell, of course, I said yes. When I first did *Devil in Mage*, I had only four pages to work with. In order to do the story on an immediate frame of time reference, unfolding before you panel by panel, you wouldn't have gotten much story per issue. This way, with the distance and the attitude that this is a historical tale and the events have already unfolded, there's much more of a wealth of knowledge conveyed. Your mind immediately starts filling in the gaps. With more conventional storytelling, you aren't doing that. You're waiting for the gaps to be *filled in* for you.

Although Christine Spar still wears the mask in the graphic novel, "*nobody* who is in the book now will be Grendel," Wagner reveals.

The latest four issues, #16-19, the ones that I drew," observes Wagner, "are mainly a storytelling experiment for me. These issues are a chance to try out some offbeat formats—like the 25 panels-per-page thing that I did in the first two black and white issues. With this, I'm trying to capture the feeling of the classic old crime pulp magazines. The first two issues are akin to a hard-boiled detective story. The next two are more psychologically oriented, more twisted. So, what goes on then is a set-up for future storylines which will advance in issues #20-23. I also thought it would be good to go back and tell some tales of Hunter Rose since he was really the Grendel that I drew. I was glad to have the chance to return and do it again."

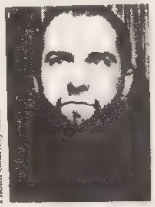
Hunter Rose, Christine Spar, Brian—these are the Grendels of the past. But what of the future? "Well," Wagner notes, "Hunter Rose *wasn't* the first Grendel. In fact, I'm *sure* he wasn't. So, ultimately I'm going to explore that fact. As for the future, let me put it this way. *Nobody* who is in the book now will be Grendel. The next person to be inhabited by the Grendel force doesn't happen until the year 2512. I use the term 'force' because I feel that's what it really is: a force that will move, inhabit, and of course, change people."

Wagner also has other changes in store for Grendel. "The changes in the character will be progressive and not the way people expect," he says. "After the four issues I'm doing now, the persona swirls around for a couple of centuries. It never inhabits one person, but its effects are felt through a variety of people. When a new story featuring a new Grendel persona takes place, a new team of artists will tell the tale. I feel this is a good way to bring in a new artist, and when you think about it, it fits."

The artist taking over after Wagner's four issues will be newcomer Hannibal King; inker Tim Sale and colorist Joe Matt complete the team for issues #20-23. The storyline in these issues concerns the growth and importance of the Grendel character in its world, covering a vast amount of time. It jumps 75 years one issue, then 100 years the next. Beginning with *Grendel* #24, the penciller will be John K. Snyder III with Jay Geldof returning as inker. This team will continue for the next 10 issues, which have a heavy religious content.

"On that particular string of issues," comments Wagner, "I'll be trying out another storytelling experiment I've had on my mind for a while. Every third issue, the art team will switch off. Geldof will pencil and Snyder will ink."

While Wagner is busy plotting and writing future Grendels, he's also tying up work on two Grendel books, a novel and *Grendel Volume 1*. The Grendel novel is "going to be a novelization of both the Hunter Rose and Christine Spar stories. And then, if there's a sequel, which I'll probably do, it will start with the Brian story and keep on going from there," Wagner explains. "Ballantine Books is publishing it in October in both a mass market and a trade edition. In addition to writing the book, I'll also be doing the



Photos: Courtesy Comico

"What drew me to comics," says Matt Wagner, "was the characters themselves. It's *still* that way now."

Art: Matt Wagner/Kelli

"The Hero Discovered" by both sides of a magical conflict, Kevin Matchstick must confront his true nature.

cover and black-and-white chapter headings.

"Then, Comico will be repackaging the Christine Spar stories for *Grendel Volume 1* in both paperback and hardback. I'm also working on an 80-page *Grendel* annual with *Empire Lanes* artist Peter Gross. The annual will link up the Snyder/Geldof stories to a run of stories that will be open to a variety of artists. I'm doing this to give much of the new talent a chance."

Born and raised in upstate Pennsylvania, Matt Wagner always wanted to work in comics. "My mother has a school book of mine that I had in second grade," he admits, "and in it is the age-old question: 'What do you want to be when you grow up?' Well for the answer, I wrote, 'A comic-book writer.' "

At that time, Wagner also started his art career. "I was constantly doodling," he recalls, "everywhere and anywhere. I never stopped. When I started getting into comics, I, like every other comic artist, starting copying the comics. First, it was the different aspects of the character, the pose, the structuring, expressions. Then, as time went by, I started studying how the story was laid out and how you went from one panel to the next."

As he got older, he started to read and collect the adventures of Batman, The Shadow (both pulp and comic versions), Captain Marvel and Tarzan. "The thing that drew me to these and other comics," adds Wagner, "was not the artwork, but the characters themselves. It's *still* that way now."

To extend and sharpen his artistic talents, Wagner attended the famed Philadelphia College of Art, but after two-and-a-half years, he left. "I didn't feel that I learned anything new and I was given an opportunity to work for Comico. As a matter of fact, the first *Grendel* came out while I was still in art school. When *Mage* came about, it took up most of my time with the coloring and all, so I left school."

All artists in all fields work in different ways. Wagner's way is certainly different. "I start with images. Not just words or pictures but feeling. That will manifest itself into words or a visual image. The plotline and dialogue will practically write itself from there.

"Now with *Mage*, it's much easier. It just happens. I always take what has happened to me and work it into a whimsical fantasy. Of course, modeling your main character after someone you know well or see a great deal of doesn't hurt either."

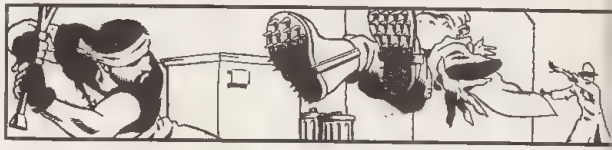
Wagner knows well of what he speaks, for he is the model for Kevin Matchstick, the sorcerous hero who discovers his true nature when mystic forces collide in Manhattan. He appears as that character on the cover of *Mage* #15, the series' final issue.

And what of *Mage*? "I'm doing the new story that started up in *Grendel* #17. The new series, *Mage II* will be out in June 1989," Wagner explains. "The story takes place five years after *Mage I*. At this point, Kevin has been without Mirth for about two or three years, and he has changed. Kevin is more sure of himself. The feeling of the stories will be adventurous and very frolicking, just like the first one."

Many comics creators have dreamed of a call from Hollywood and the prospect of a movie or TV version of their creation. Wagner received that fateful call about *Grendel*. "Stuff goes real slow in Hollywood," he says. "It gets bandied about here and there. I hear more interest about it from time to time, and we've been working on a tentative screen treatment, which has had to wait because I've been so busy. The same thing goes for *Mage*. There has been talk from some of the top people in the movie industry who think it would make a great film, but until you see paper and money, there's not much of a chance. The movie industry in general seems to work either sluggishly slow or volcanically fast. Right now, it's just about halfway."

Over a year ago, Wagner wrote and pencilled *The Demon*, a four issue miniseries for DC Comics based on the character created by the legendary Jack Kirby. But for now, Matt Wagner has no further plans to work on any other company-owned characters. "I have been busy enough just doing stuff that I own, so I would like to stick to that. The benefits are obvious. The rewards are much more satisfying artistically, and in the long run, financially." ■

Mage Art: Trademark & Copyright 1987, 1988 Matt Wagner



Art: Matt Wagner

The bases are loaded for the forces of darkness, and only Kevin Matchstick, *Mage*, can score a home run against them.

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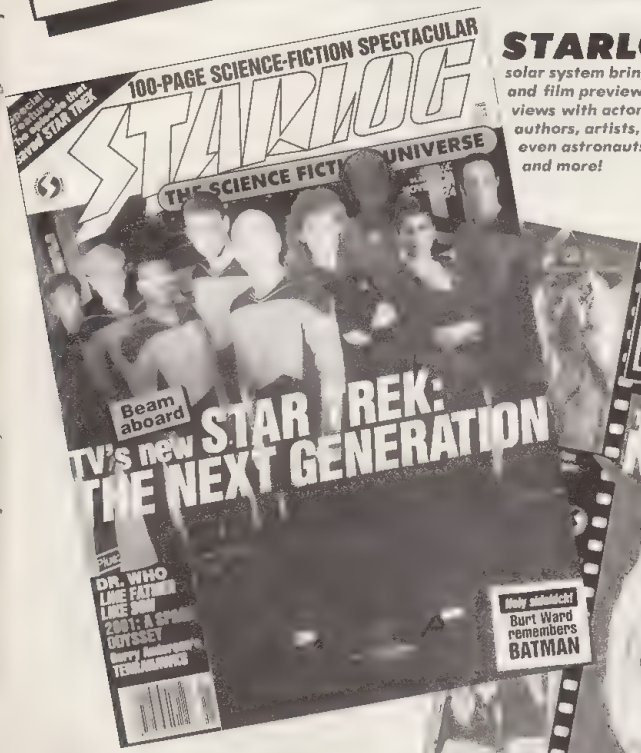
A UNIVERSE OF WONDER AND THRILLS!



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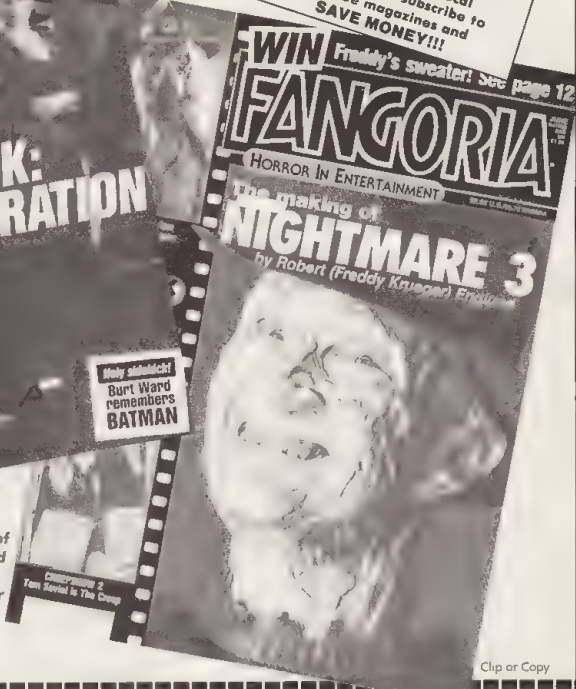
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Ordway

(continued from page 41)

exist in the pocket universe. There's that barrier that prevents her from traveling through, though, so she's sent back in time to avoid it. She thaws out in our universe and time. The story also involves the Phantom Zone criminals and Lana Lang.

CS: Is the new Supergirl going to be around after the current storyline with her is over?

Ordway: Well, she's not going to be out of the picture, but I don't know to what extent she'll be around. A great deal of stuff is in a state of flux with her.

CS: Now that you've written the *Superman Annual*, are you going to venture into more full writing assignments?

Ordway: I'm writing *Adventure* #344, featuring the return of Brainiac. After *Earth Stealers* and various other matters, our schedule was a little messed up. We're all working to get back on track. It's not like I'm inheriting a job, or anything. We have to see if they like what I'm doing. I'll still be plotting the book, regardless of the situation.

CS: What's going to happen with the Gangbuster character?

Ordway: The Gangbuster will return. Jose Delgado is paralyzed, but the Gangbuster will return. He will *not* be Lois Lane! Gangbuster will not be a female character. There'll be red herrings put in as to who he is. Jose will be in comic-time, so he'll be healing faster than a normal human could. Jose's helper is Jerry White, who becomes Jose's "legman." I do want to treat Jose's paralysis with some real feeling—what it's like to be paralyzed, but you have to keep up with comic time and move things along.

CS: Anything special for the near future?

Ordway: We're planning *sometime* in the future to do a little bit of a supernatural story. It'll feature another teaming of Superman and Captain Marvel—this time, Marvel will have more of a role than he did recently.

CS: How is he illustrated?

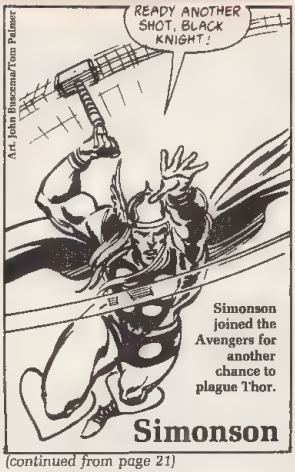
Ordway: More like the C.C. Beck version—kind of cartoony. That's still popular. People still want to see it, but *only* if it's handled right. I think the character has a lot of potential, and it hasn't been used lately.

CS: Not that you have much time these days, but what non-Superman activities are you up to?

Ordway: Just covers. *Earth Stealers* took care of that for a while. Now, I'm co-plotting, which keeps me busy. It takes up a little more time now.

CS: What kind of short-range goals do you have?

Ordway: I want to prove that Superman is a viable character for the '80s and '90s. I want to make him work and sell, without compromising his legend or the character himself. Forge ahead and break new ground! ■


READY ANOTHER SHOT, BLACK KNIGHT!
Art: John Buscema/Tom Palmer
Simonson joined the Avengers for another chance to plague Thor.
Simonson

(continued from page 21)

bring that title up into the higher sales echelons?

"I doubt my work on *The Avengers* will manage to bring them up to even second place among the Marvel bestsellers," he modestly admits. "The first couple of places are *X-Men* and *X-Factor*. What has happened with the mutant books is that, even though they're part of the Marvel universe, the creators on those books have, I think, created a *sub-universe*. In a way, it's like the original Marvel universe, a small series of books that are tightly related. It has been a slow development over the past 10 years, with a rapid increase in the past two or three.

"It's no longer a question of overtaking a single book, it's really that there has been a concerted effort over a period of time by first-rate creators that has produced almost a subculture inside the Marvel universe," Simonson remarks. "They have a whole host of good guys and bad guys who have strong mutant associations, although they are usable elsewhere. *The Avengers* has the Marvel universe to borrow from, but I'm just one guy, John and Tom are just one artist a piece, and I don't think there's the same kind of energy that runs from *The Avengers* back into the Marvel universe as runs from *X-Men* into *X-Factor* and all the other mutant books. I won't say it's not possible, but I think *The Avengers*, in a way, stands alone, while the mutant books make up a unit.

"I would *love* to outsell them, don't get me wrong, but I don't know that I have that kind of world-ranging creative ability," Walt Simonson concludes. "It doesn't happen very often—it has been tried any number of times. If it could be manufactured to order, a great deal of us would be much richer. I do think, with John Buscema and Tom Palmer, I can make a nifty *Avengers*." ■

Marvel

(continued from page 55)

feature is probably going to be a Colossus series, written by Ann Nocenti and drawn by Rick Leonardi," the editor reveals. "Don McGregor and Craig Russell are doing another 'War of the Worlds,' so we're going to see what's going on 14 years later. Roy Thomas will be doing an eight-chapter 'Eternals' serial.

"Characters who maybe didn't get a good break the first time around will have a better chance this time. There's a serial being done involving Devil-Slayer, written by Dwight Zimmerman. Rodney Ramos will pencil that, and at least one chapter will be inked by Bob McLeod. By the end, Devil-Slayer's actually going to be a new character, one who is more set in the '80s and better motivated."

Current fan favorites and fondly-remembered heroes and series aren't the only ones to profit from the format originally developed by former editor Michael Higgins. "We have plenty of people, some of the top professionals in the industry, that you really couldn't even get to do a fill-in issue on another comic because it would be 22 pages and they couldn't commit to that, they're too busy with other projects," notes Kavanagh. "We can get them to do serials for us because all we're really asking them to do is eight pages at a time. *Everybody* can find room for eight pages, and they all have characters they have wanted to do for years."

"Kerry Gammill really isn't a guy you see featured in a regular book every month, but we're having him do an eight-part 'Foes of Spider-Man' by Danny Fingeroth, which is going to concentrate on the Sinister Syndicate," adds Assistant Editor Mike Rockwitz. "It takes him forever to do it, but when you can get an artist like that to do it, it's really good.

"Also, many of the people who are writing these stories can't get their own books. Dan Fingeroth has written a lot of Spider-Man stuff, and he edited the book. It's just right now, the teams are already established on these books. Here's an opportunity for him to write that eight-part story that he can't do anywhere else."

Comments Kavanagh, "It's a nice opportunity for all the creators in the field to do all the things that they've wanted to do and for the audience to see characters that they've been asking to see."

Although originally announced as a weekly title, Kavanagh doesn't view *Marvel Comics Presents* seeming demotion to a fortnight as a detriment.

"The reason it's a bi-weekly is because we really don't want to burden the audience with having to spend $1.25 every week that they might not necessarily be able to afford. We certainly have the material to do a weekly, and *if* the fans demand it," says Terry Kavanagh, "we will definitely go weekly." ■

With the mighty Thor at his side, the jade giant is back with a video vengeance!

By MARC SHAPIRO

When we last left Dr. David Banner, he was standing alongside a dusty road, thumbing a ride for himself and his over-muscled alter-ego to the land of syndication as the 80th and final episode of *The Incredible Hulk* faded to black.

"There's a loyal following of people out there who want to know what happened after Banner hit the road that last time," says actor Bill Bixby who played the fugitive scientist with the big green problem. "Now, we're going to let them know."

Bixby is referring to *The Incredible Hulk Returns*, a two-hour TV movie tentatively slated for airing this month on NBC. The movie is a reunion film in the classic sense; reuniting Bill Bixby as Banner, Lou Ferrigno as the Hulk and Jack Colvin as the intrepid reporter Jack McGee. Rounding out the *Hulk* alumni is the original series producer/director/writer Nicholas Corea, who scripted and directed the new film.

The Incredible Hulk Returns takes up the Banner story some time after the series' end. Currently working at the hi-tech Lambert Institute, Banner has not "hulked out" in two years, thanks in large

[Lou Fe[illegible]no] and the mighty Thor (Eric [illegible] buddies to beat on

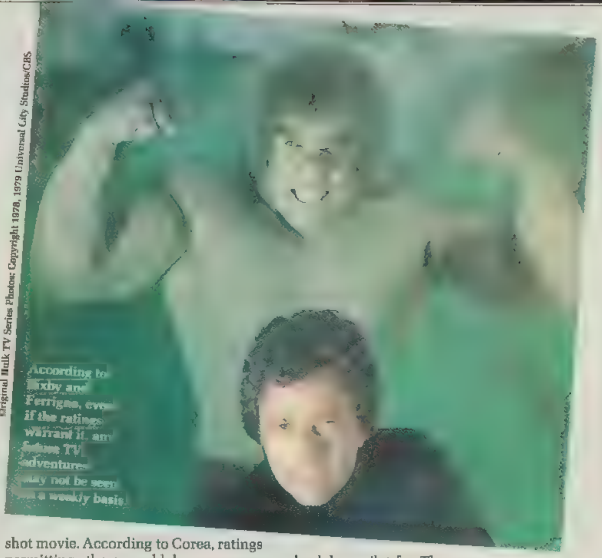
part to his ability to focus on the image of his lover, biogenetics honcho Maggie Shaw.

The Lambert Institute's current project is a machine called the Gamma Transponder which Banner, on the sly, has been tinkering with in the hopes that a polarity reversal will rid him of the Hulk forever. Banner is about to take the big step when into his life walks former student Don Blake with a Hulk-like problem of his own.

It seems that on a scientific expedition in Norway, Blake stumbled upon the hammer of Thor which, in turn, "channeled" into existence the spirit of its 11th century owner. Storywise, Thor (played by actor Eric Kramer, see sidebar) was an arrogant guy in his previous life and so was denied entrance to Valhalla by Odin until he performs a number of positive acts for humanity.

Banner hulks out, the Hulk and Thor fight, they make friends and team up to battle a group of bad guys intent on using the Gamma Transponder for evil purposes. Hulk and Thor kick butt, but Banner, at the conclusion, is forced to hit the road once again.

New World Pictures, which owns the rights to the Marvel Comics characters, obviously has plans for more than a one-shot movie. According to Corea, ratings permitting, there could be as many as three *Hulk* TV movies a year, each serving to introduce and spin off another comic book character into a possible movie or series. Corea concedes that *The Incredible Hulk Returns* is serving as a backdoor pilot for Thor.



Original Hulk TV Series Photos: Copyright 1978, 1979 Universal City Studios/CBS

Whatever the purpose, Bixby is enthusiastic about taking the character of David Banner out of mothballs.

"The idea of doing one or a series of *Hulk* movies fascinated me," says the actor. "His first meeting with the Hulk is exciting as hell because he has found somebody who can give him a good fight. He's very different from the comic-book Thor, who is a pretty straightforward guy and whose answer to most problems is to throw his hammer around."

Kramer, a 6'3" actor/stuntman, was born and raised in Michigan. He remembers being familiar with the character, although he wasn't a big fan. He also recalls how dabbling with acting in high school turned into a full-time occupation after graduation.

"After I graduated, I auditioned for an acting program in Canada, was accepted and moved up there."

Kramer's good looks, coupled with such divergent skills as fencing and staging stunts, helped find him regular work in Canadian television and films. He jokes about the fact that, with the possible exception of a movie called *Gunfighters*, "none of them made it into the United States."

As Thor, the actor notes that he strikes a rather rugged if familiar stance.

"The armor I wear is all beat up," he explains. "I've also got the long blonde flowing hair (courtesy of Wigs Are Us). Thor looks like he has really been through the wars."

New World Pictures spokespeople have dropped a good many hints about Thor ending up in his own TV series or another TV movie if this appearance meets with favorable response.

"I've heard the *Thor* series rumors. In this business, you hear them every day," says Eric Kramer. "But *if* it were to happen, I would do it in a minute."

—*Marc Shapiro*

Art: John Buscema/Tony DeZuniga

Thor in the Flesh

Eric Kramer didn't feel that he needed any preparation for his mighty role of Norse good guy Thor. However, many others did.

"From the moment I landed the part, people began sending me Thor comics," chuckles the actor as he considers the intricacies of his role in the TV movie *The Incredible Hulk Returns*. "They really felt that reading the comic books would help me play the part."

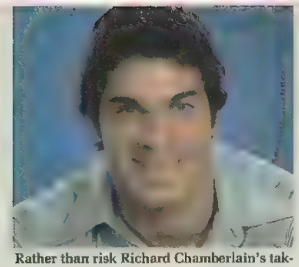
Fortunately, Kramer didn't mold his character around those pages because the on-the-tube Thor (script by Nicholas Corea) is cut from a different cloth.

"Thor is basically a fun-loving guy looking for a good fight," says Kramer whose character is "channeled" into existence by David Banner's buddy Donald Blake (see accompanying article for the storyline).

Thor Photo: Paul Drinkwater/Copyright 1988 NBC

Unlike the noble hero of the comics, Eric Kramer's "Thor is a fun-loving guy looking for a good fight."

Photo: Alice S. Hall/Copyright 1988 NBC Hulk & Thor Characters: Trademark & Copyright 1988 Marvel Entertainment Group



Rather than risk Richard Chamberlain's taking over the part, Lou Ferrigno decided to return to the "role that basically made my career."

tor. "With a movie, we can get much more graphic in terms of presentation. When the idea of the reunion film came up, I sat down and ran the original pilot just to reacquaint myself with the Hulk. It was pure dynamite even 11 years after the fact. And I'm convinced we can do even better now."

Bixby notes that viewers shouldn't expect a drastic change in the way he plays Banner. "I'm not playing him that much different. Banner is a little more mature and he has settled down to the point where he can have a satisfying relationship with a woman. Basically, he's still the same sensitive, compassionate individual, but he is now finally on the verge of getting away from this alter-ego who has made his life a living hell."

Bixby, whose post-*Hulk* years have included a stint in the short-lived TV series *Good Night Beantown* and various directorial assignments (*Sledge Hammer!*), has fond memories of his four years with *The Incredible Hulk*.

"I definitely learned what working long, hard hours was about," chuckles Bixby. "Yet, I also found playing David Banner was a major acting challenge.

"Here I was, playing somebody who was trying to suppress a primitive alter-ego. At one point during the show's run, I became frightened because I thought I would run out of the capacity to keep dealing with Banner's problem. But I didn't, because Banner was a multi-faceted personality and exploring those facets always gave me the opportunity to stretch as an actor."

Nicholas Corea thought the idea of bringing back *The Incredible Hulk* was definitely a "bizarre" notion. In fact, it was an idea he originally thought he could do without.

"I really didn't want any part of it," explains Corea. "But when I heard Bill, Lou and everybody from the series would be back, I said, 'What the hell, this could be fun.' "

Corea says that the film, which features the Hulk-Thor duo in major FX scenes involving a helicopter and machine gun fire, is visually more extensive than the TV series was.

"Storywise, it's entirely different. The old series was very thematic. The TV *Hulk* stories were all based on themes like love, hate and greed. We were always able to make a moral point at each story's end. I don't see *any* basic theme to this movie except, possibly, redemption."

He likes the notion of using *Hulk* movies to spin off other Marvel characters. However, Corea cautions that viewers shouldn't expect the entire Marvel roster to ultimately make it to the small screen.

"The reason the Hulk works so well on television," Corea says, "is that we've been able to take the character out of the comics and make him work on a believable level on television. We didn't have to monkey too much with Thor to make him work on TV, which is why he was the ideal choice for this movie [the only major difference being that Blake summons rather than turns into Thor].

"Using the Hulk and Thor as examples that work, I would think Daredevil and Dr. Strange would be good candidates for a future movie. For the same reason, I *don't* think the X-Men would work. There would also probably be some problems with the Silver Surfer. I just don't see us making a television star out of a character with no face who hangs out over planets on his surfboard and quotes philosophy."

Lou Ferrigno has no problem turning green one more time. "Obviously, I'm not going to get the roles Richard Chamberlain gets," chuckles Ferrigno. "On the other hand, could you picture Richard Chamberlain playing the Hulk?"

Ferrigno, who bulked up an additional 40 pounds for the movie, claims he really couldn't see anybody else but himself in the role.

"The Hulk has figured in a big part of my life," he comments. "Playing that role basically made my career. I just couldn't see letting go of the part. To put anybody else in that green makeup, it just wouldn't be the same."

And Ferrigno knows about the possibility of additional *Hulk* movies, though he hasn't decided if his participation will go beyond this one film. One thing he knows for certain is that he will *not* return to a series grind.

"The big problem I had with doing *Hulk* on a weekly basis is that you tended to get a little bored after three or four shows, lose your momentum and have to keep psyching yourself up to keep things fresh. With this movie, that *won't* be a problem."

Ferrigno points to his maintaining the green color (while his comic-book counterpart now sports a grey tint) as a sign that the producers of *The Incredible*

(continued on page 66)

Hulk Art Jeff Purvis

While the TV Hulk will be the same as he ever was, the gregarious grey goliath of the comics will be moving to his new home: Las Vegas. New supporting characters, new mysteries and tons of team-ups await!

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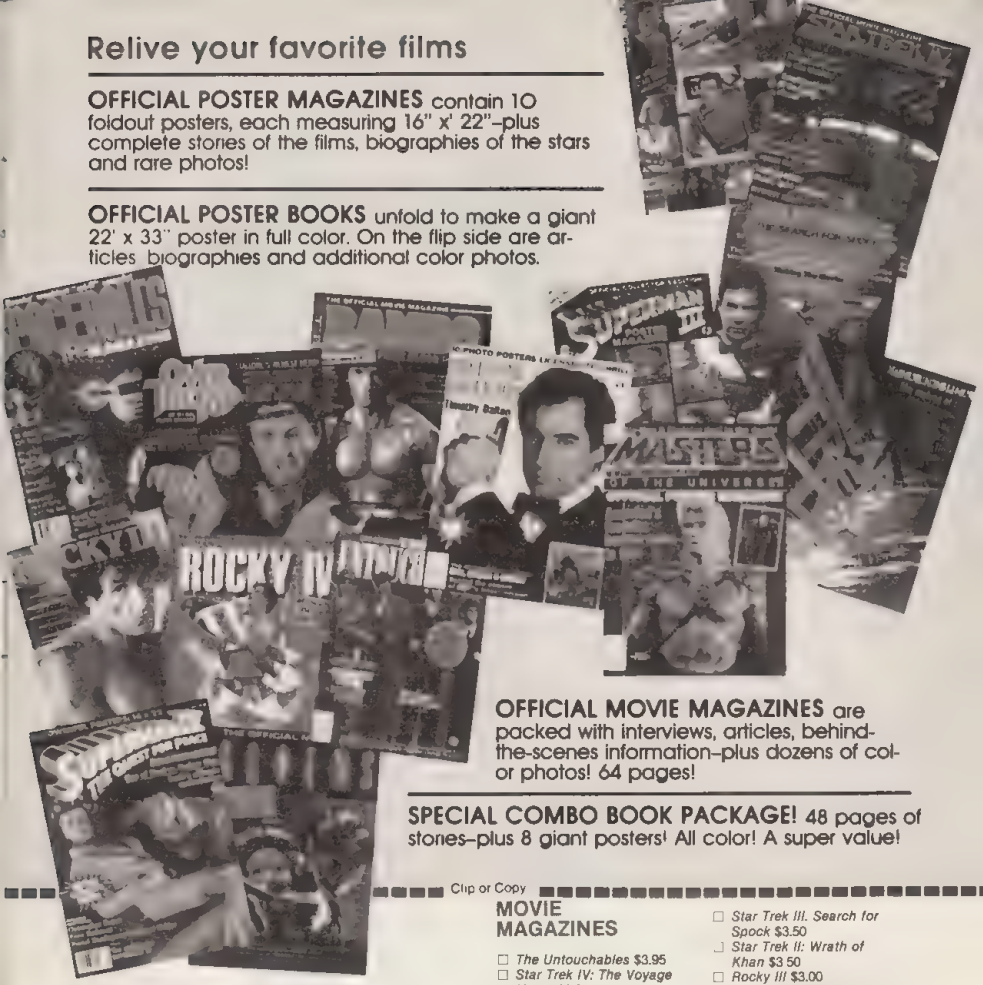

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Hulk

(continued from page 64)

Hulk Returns are attempting to remain faithful to the original series. But, he predicts, unlike the original show (in which the Hulk was usually pictured in a fit of mindless rage), audiences will get to see a different side of the big green muscle machine.

"I'm working real hard on adding more in the way of character to the creature," relates Ferrigno. "He will come across as being a little more sympathetic and people will get a better feel for just how intelligent the Hulk really is."

His future acting roles may take him far from what could be considered the terminal stereotype of playing somebody big and green. "But I'll *never* look at playing the Hulk as a mistake," Ferrigno confesses. "The Hulk has been good to me. That's why I'm playing him again."

Norman Leavitt is the guy with the green. The veteran makeup man spent four years doing Ferrigno and, on leave from the enviable task of making up Cybill Shepherd on *Moonlighting*, he is repeating the process for the movie.

"It's basically the same process," says Leavitt of re-creating the Hulk in 1988. "The technology is different but it still centers around a wig, contacts and that green body makeup."

The early stages of transforming Ferrigno into the Hulk began with facial casts and measurements (the latter being required for creating slightly altered teeth, nose and forehead appliances). "Lou has grown over the years, so I don't think he'll look exactly like he did in the series but he will be pretty close," Leavitt explains.

Leavitt echoes the statements of others connected with the project when he explains why he jumped at the chance to hulk out once more.

"I'm doing it because it's fun getting together with everybody again. This is a reunion in the finest sense of the word."

Bixby agrees and points to the introduction of Thor as something the followers of the comics' Hulk—people who didn't always look kindly on the *Hulk* TV series—may enjoy.

"In the comic books, superheroes always got together to either fight each other or to team up against a common foe," Bill Bixby explains. "The idea of linking Thor and, in future films, other comic characters is a tight bond to the original comics.

"However, there's also a great deal going on with the film that will be familiar to people whose only contact with the Hulk has been the TV series. One of the most striking of those will be at the end when David Banner is forced to leave the woman he loves and go on the run again. It was that way for 80 shows in the *Hulk* series. . .

"And it will be that way again." ■

Moebius

(continued from page 28)

which began in 1980. The six French volumes will be combined into three American volumes with the same coloring as in France.

Again, Giraud is hesitant to reveal much about the storyline. "It is difficult to explain what the Incal is, because I never try to give an explanation, a synopsis of the story. It's very complicated. It is a science-fiction story, but it's also mystical, and in it, we try to communicate wisdom." It isn't revealing too much, however, to explain that the Incal itself is a tiny, pyramidical object carried by futuristic drifter John Difool, who resembles a cranky Ichabod Crane. He's a private eye who finds himself caught up in crazy and spiritual comic and cosmic adventures. (In one book, he fathers an entire planet of Difool lookalikes who hate him.) Difool is trapped between the parrot-faced Bergs and the vaguely apish mutants in their battle to obtain the Incal; other forces, mundane and cosmic, also compete for the power-packed fragment.

Moebius' art for *Incal* shows his own metamorphosis over the eight-year span of its creation, from the open clarity of the early chapters, through mysticism of the middle stretches, into fairly graphic violence of the chapters he drew after arriving in the United States.

Giraud, who has surprised others, was surprised himself by working with Jodorowsky. "It's kind of autobiographical but is also not autobiographical, because I didn't do the story. It's biographical. Jodorowsky didn't ask me anything about my life, but he's very psychic. When he works with someone, he channels directly to the artist, not completely on purpose, but he spontaneously gives back to the artist some information about his own life. He did the same with other artists in France.

"*Incal* was my story. It's very symbolic, I'm not John Difool really, but my name is Jean and I'm a fool, so I *am* John Difool." And Jean Giraud laughs Moebius' quicksilver laugh again. ■

ALIENS

(continued from page 53)

Dinosaurs, Aliens, I like to draw all kinds of such 'beasties.' I also like the *film noir* mood of the *ALIEN* movies, the kind of style that recalls those old Humphrey Bogart pictures from the 1940s." But most of all, Nelson likes to add layers of texture to the surfaces of his work. This trait is so pronounced, in fact, some colleagues have nicknamed him "E.T." for "Extra Texture."

This E.T. isn't calling home, however, he's calling Pasadena. Since Nelson is based in Illinois and Verheiden resides in California, theirs is of necessity a long-distance collaboration. As the artist recalls, "After I did all the pre-production stuff for the *ALIENS* comic, I met Verheiden for the first time in San Diego. We sat down and discussed various ideas." The pair now keep in close contact by phone.

Nelson got involved with *ALIENS* in a roundabout way. Dark Horse was acquainted with his work, including *Silverwing*, a little opus the artist playfully describes as a "kind of *film noir* dinosaur detective series." But things really began happening when the comic company decided to produce a *Godzilla Special*, a straightforward biography of Japan's most famous monster export. Since they knew Nelson had a knack for drawing prehistoric beasts, Dark Horse asked him to submit a rendering of the Tokyo terror.

"This *Godzilla Special* was *not* a spoof," Nelson says emphatically, "but tried to put the monster in some sort of historical perspective. They created a kind of portfolio for the book by asking different artists to submit their interpretations of the story. I submitted a Godzilla drawing on duotoné board which they really liked."

He didn't get any Godzilla assignment, but the "powers that be" at Dark Horse were sufficiently impressed by his work to give him the nod for *ALIENS*.

Although Verheiden and 20th Century Fox are allowing Nelson full artistic license to depict the *ALIENS* universe, Nelson is helped by his partner's detailed scripts. On average, Verheiden produces 40 single-space script pages for each 20-page issue.

Verheiden is also writing *The American* (see sidebar) and hoping to work on further low-budget filmmaking projects, but for the moment, *ALIENS* is the focus of his attention. The series may go beyond the initial six issues. And Verheiden *may* do an official comic version of the third movie, but he asserts, "Dark Horse knows more about this than I do."

When pressed, Mark Verheiden seems to feel the *ALIENS* comic *will* continue. As he comments, "The six-issue miniseries is a self-contained story, with a definite end. But that doesn't mean we can't do others. There are a *billion* *ALIENS* stories out there!" ■

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COMICS REPORTER

The Comics Screen

In some way or another, these heroes and heroines have been announced as bound for another medium: movie, TV, animation, even Broadway. The characters originated in one of the well-springs of heroic lore: comic books, comic strips, pulp magazines, radio, cartoons or action paperback series. The following list is by no means complete and will be continuously updated. All projects are live-action unless otherwise specified.

The Addams Family. Projected TV pilot.

The Adjuster Comic character in development from Marvel & Columbia Pictures TV.

The Airtight Garage. Moebius' SF graphic novel. Animated full-length feature. Co-production between a Montreal-based animation firm Productions Pascal Blais & Starwatcher Graphics.

The American. Dark Horse Comics hero in development as film or TV series. (see article)

American Flagg! Movie. Dick Rosetti, producer.

Annie Separate movie & Broadway musical sequels in development. Movie for Christmas release.

Andy Capp Separate British & American TV pilots in works

Antman. New World developed a script.

Archie. Two-hour NBC-TV movie/series pilot, to air 1987-88. Also, *The New Archies*, animated series from DIC Enterprises & Saban Productions on NBC Saturdays.

Babar. The children's book characters star in *Babar: The Movie*, an animated project from Nelvana.

The Batman. Movie from Warner Bros. Script by Sam Hamm. Director: Tim Burton. Producers: Michael Uslan & Ben Melnicker, Jon Peters & Peter Guber. Filming to begin this fall (see articles)

Beetle Bailey Movie.

Betty Boop. Movie. Pierre Spengler, producer. Richard Fleischer (whose father & uncle, Dave & Max Fleischer, created the character) may direct

Blade Movie based on *Tomb of Dracula* character in development at New World Pictures. Script by Lee Goldberg & William Rabkin. To be directed by Tom De Simone

Blackhawk. Film.

Blondie Further half-hour CBS animated special planned.

Brenda Starr, Reporter Movie starring Brooke Shields & Timothy Dalton. Release has been delayed by rights dispute.

Captain Teen & Company. Rankin-Bass is developing as Saturday morning animated series.

Captain America. Proposed Cannon Films version apparently dead. Broadway musical in development.

Cathy Further animated TV specials to appear on CBS

The Chameleon. New comics character. Joint production between Marvel Productions & Ohlmeyer Communications TV.

Chip & Dale. Animated characters to star in new syndicated series for Disney.

Conan the Barbarian. Two different *Conan III* script treatments were prepared. Sequel in limbo due to Arnold Schwarzenegger's projects & earlier Conan films' disappointing box-office returns.

Copperhead: The Legend of Mongrel. Joint project of Marvel & Laurel Entertainment developed by Jim Shooter & director George Romero. Reportedly dead, though Romero would still "like" to do it.

Cracked. Superhero parody movie in development.

Crossfire. TV pilot. ABC.

Daffy Duck. "The Duxorcist" in release. Another new animated short, "Night of the Living Duck," will follow.

Daredevil. TV and movie incarnation discussed

Delta Tenn. TV series (see item).

DNAgents. Option lapsed on CBS-TV movie. Picked up by UA for feature.

Dennis the Menace. TV movie aired via syndication. Live-action series may follow. Animated series in syndication.

Dick Tracy. Movie. Long in development with various directors and writers at different studios, now at 20th Century Fox. Several different screenplays extant. Still an active project

Doc Savage. Movie project reportedly in the works.

Dr. Mortalis. New Jack Kirby comics character created for Empire Entertainment movie.

Dr. Strange. Movie. Bob Gale is scripting.

Dominique Shade. New comics character in development for Marvel.

Donald Duck. Donald makes cameo appearances in animated syndicated TV series, *Duck Tales*.

Elektra. Movie scripted by L.M. Kit Carson & Jim McBride. McBride may direct.

Elfquest. Movie project in limbo at this time.

The Executioner Movie Sylvester Stallone will star.

Fantastic Four. Movie in development with Neue

OK, "Who Framed Roger Rabbit?"

The list of suspects is considerable. Their aliases are infamous. Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Donald Duck, Mickey Mouse, Betty Boop. And they --as well as a great many other, hitherto-unrevealed surprise cartoon guest stars—are all part of the mystery of *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?*

Based on Gary Wolf's 1981 novel *Who Censored Roger Rabbit?*, this project combines live-action footage, animation and special effects to create what the moviemakers call "a breakthrough film." The director is Robert Zemeckis, famed for *I Wanna Hold Your Hand*, *Romancing the Stone*, *Back to the Future* and *Amazing Stories*' "Go to the Head of the Class."

Bob (*Mona Lisa*) Hoskins stars as down-on-his-luck LA private eye Eddie Valiant, a human who investigates a sordid case of cartoons and corruption. Valiant's client is Toon star Roger Rabbit (playing a very animated version of himself). Other Toon stars from Warner Bros., Disney, MGM and the Fleischer Studios put in cameo appearances. Joanna (*Blade Runner*) Cassidy (as Eddie's girl Delores), Christopher (*Back to the Future*) Lloyd (as Judge Doom) and Stubby (*Sweet Charity*) Kaye lead the human supporting cast.

Art: Ballantine Books

Just the facts: The title has been changed to protect the innocent as a human P.I. tries to clear a Toon bunny from the heinous plot by Disney and Amblin.

As consultant Chuck Jones has noted (CSQ #2), those ducky celebrities, Daffy and Donald, meet on screen for the *first* time in *Roger Rabbit*. The movie is also historic in other ways. It's an Amblin Entertainment collaboration with the Walt Disney Studios. Amblin's Steven Spielberg, Kathleen Kennedy and Frank Marshall serve as executive producers. The producer is Robert (*Indiana Jones & the Temple of Doom*) Watts.

England's Richard Williams Studios is providing the bulk of the special Toon footage with other sequences being handled by Disney artisans in Los Angeles. Industrial Light & Magic is compositing the various footage. Under ILM veteran Ken Ralston's supervision, the Lucasfilm facility is also doing the extensive blue screen lensing and completing a voluminous amount of other effects work.

Who Framed Roger Rabbit?, an unheralded combination of talents from Amblin, Walt Disney, Lucasfilm, ILM, Richard Williams and Warner Bros., opens June 24.

—David McDonnell

Tweed Photos: Courtesy Sumaki, Green & Co.

Actress Shannon Tweed has her sights set on becoming the futuristic lady cop, *Delta Tenn*.

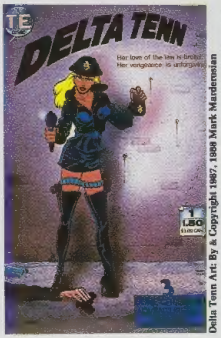
"Delta Tenn" to TV?

Most comic book writer/artists can only dream of having their characters optioned by Hollywood. But for Mark Marderosian, creator of Entertainment Comics' *Delta Tenn*, it not only happened, but he helped to bring it about.

It started with a letter from a fan of the futuristic lady cop, suggesting that if Delta Tenn ever made it to the big screen, Sybil (*Battle Beyond the Stars*) Danning would be perfect in the role. Marderosian replied in *Delta Tenn* #3, that he disagreed. He saw actress Shannon Tweed as Delta.

"While I was working on the third issue," Marderosian explains, "I saw Shannon Tweed's guest appearance on *Cagney & Lacey*, in which she played a TV detective. Seeing her in a police precinct, I felt like I was watching my own character come to life. I thought if *Delta Tenn* were ever to be made into a movie, this is the person I would want to see playing the part."

Marderosian thought no more about it until after the third issue came out and he received a request for the *Delta Tenn* press kit from Sybil Danning's business manager. Surprised by the actress' interest in his character, Marderosian decided to send copies to Shannon Tweed, too.



Delta Tenn Art: By & Copyright 1987, 1988 Mark Marderosian

Mark Marderosian took steps to see that Tweed would become the no-nonsense *Delta Tenn*.

Shannon Tweed picks up the story at this point.

"I received a parcel from Mark in the mail," she recalls. "I opened it up and I saw *myself* on the cover of a comic book! So, when I started reading it and he mentioned my name, I said, 'Well, I *can't* pass this up.' So, I optioned it from Mark. I'll be pitching it to studios and independent producers within the next six months. I would like to get it made into a TV series as a starrer for myself."

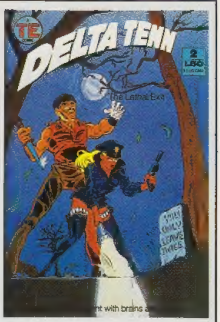
Tweed adds that her boy friend, actor/rock star/longtime comics fan/former fanzine contributor Gene (*Runaway*) Simmons (STARLOG #90), also urged her to option the character, but she doesn't see him guesting on the show—especially as a villain. "As a matter of fact, I don't see him doing *any* more bad guys," she says.

Delta Tenn—her last name is a play on the idea that as a woman, she is a perfect "10"—is a "Dirty Harriet" in the lawless near-future. She's outwardly gorgeous, but inwardly cold and uncompromising when dealing with lawbreakers.

Although the concept has yet to be pitched to the networks, Tweed has definite ideas about adapting the property.

"I would take her in a more human direction," the actress says. "She's a little tough for the general viewing audience. We want to make her likeable. She likes to take the law into her own hands, but so do many TV detectives, so that will go over well. She's strong. I like that about her, as I'm strong, too. It seems to me that Delta Tenn would be a natural role for me. I haven't come across many of those!"

Tweed believes that the projected show's setting may be pushed further into the future to provide more special effects opportunities. Also, she's especially intrigued by Delta's role-reversal relationship with her fawning, lovestruck boy friend, the airheaded Biff.



"Dirty Harriet's" adventures will be set further in the future than those of her comic book beat.

Asked if Mark Marderosian will be consulted when and if the project reaches development stage, Tweed replies, "Oh, definitely. Since he's the creator, I think his advice will be called on frequently. Mark knows more about her than *anybody*."

"I'm really excited about this, Mark Marderosian adds. "The catalyst for much of *Delta Tenn* is my opinion of Reaganomics. Projecting it a mere 10 years into the future is my way of commenting on it. A live-action TV series will give everyone a chance to explore the futuristic aspects of *Delta Tenn*."

—*Will Murray*

Constantin.

The Far Side. Movie version of Gary Larson comic panel. To be directed by Alan Rudolph. Alive Films production for Columbia release.

Felix the Cat. Animated feature, with animation mostly done in Hungary, for New World Pictures release.

The Flash. Movie. First draft script by Jim Strain, from a story by Todd Holland. Viewed as unlikely at this point.

The Flintstones. Movie scripted by Steven de Souza. To star Jim Belushi. Joel Silver, producer. For Tri-Star release from Taft Entertainment/Keith Barish Productions. *The Flintstone Kids* animated series continues on ABC Saturdays.

Garfield. Animated specials continue, including four half-hours & a one-hour show. Saturday morning series version debuts this fall on CBS (also includes adaptations of Jim Davis' *U.S. Acres*). Movie, *Garfield's Judgment Day*, also planned.

The Greatest American Hero. An animated version of the cancelled TV series in development at Stephen Cannell Entertainment.

The Green Hornet. Movie. For Taft Entertainment/Keith Barish Productions.

Green Lantern. Rights nearly acquired by 20th Century Fox. Deal fell through.

Hagar the Horrible. Animated CBS special.

Heavy Metal. *Heavy Metal's Burning Chrome*, animated movie based on William Gibson story, in works.

He-Man. Animated syndicated series continues. Cannon Films had planned a live-action movie sequel, *Masters of the Universe Part 2* with an entirely new cast. A TV series spin-off was in development.

The Incredible Hulk. TV movie reunion with Bill Bixby, Jack Colvin & Lou Ferrigno, *The Incredible Hulk Returns*. (see article). Animated Hulk segments will be part of *Marvel Universe* syndicated series.

Iron Man. Movie versions proposed.

The Jetsons. Movie long in development, Paramount. Gary Nardino, producer.

Jonny Quest. Syndicated animated series. Live-action movie to be written & directed by Fred Dekker. For Taft Entertainment/Keith Barish Productions.

Jon Sable, Freelance. ABC-TV series. Cancelled.

Judge Dredd. Movie. Scripted by Tim Hunter & James Crumley. Hunter will direct.

Lone Wolf & Cub. Another live-action film adaptation. Edward Pressman, producer. First was 1981's *Shogun Assassin*.

Luke Cage & Iron Fist. Movie in development. Being written by Michael Janover.

Mandrake the Magician. Movie, scripted by William Hjortsberg, in limbo.

Marvin. Half-hour animated CBS TV special.

Mighty Mouse. CBS Saturday animated series, *The New Adventures of Mighty Mouse*. Ralph Bakshi, producer. Animated movie mulled.

Mindmaster. New Jack Kirby comics character created for Empire Entertainment movie.

Mr. Magoo. Movie. Steven Tisch, producer.

Motley's Crew. Sitcom TV pilot in development.

Neil the Horse. Animation/live-action project in development.

Nick Fury, Agent of SHIELD. Movie in development with Paramount. Producers: Debra Hill & Lynn Obst.

Joe Palooka. Broadway musical in development. Rights holder exploring other options.

Peanuts. Animated TV specials continue with four new ones (including a live-action/animation combo).

The Phantom. Movie.

Plastic Man. Movie. Option recently renewed.

Popeye. CBS Saturday animated series, *Popeye & Son*. From Hanna-Barbera/King

At Midnight, All Their Agents . . .

Sam Hamm, screenwriter of *The Batman* (see page 11) has just figured out how to introduce moviegoers to another world, one where superheroes actually exist. "The first scene [of the *Watchmen* screenplay] is a televised address from the White House," the writer explains. "It says, 'The Oval Office, 1985.' And here's Richard Nixon, who's old and bent with white hair, talking about the new Russian threat to Afghanistan. 'But with the help of Dr. Manhattan,' Nixon says, 'we'll prevail.' And the camera pans over to this guy in a suit whose face is *blue*."

Aware of the problems in adapting a series so perfectly suited for comics to another medium, Hamm acknowledges the many adjustments he must make. "The *Watchmen* script is much more wacky and experimental than *Batman*," he remarks. "The great pleasure of the comic strip is Alan Moore's transitions—the way you'll see a fly on a table and the fly will generate some kind of free association, which will take you to a point 20 years ago. That's what gives the whole thing its texture.

"I'm pretty much trying to clear up the narrative line and find the equivalent whenever I can. We obviously can't do the same sort of structure, alternating issues, plot alternates with flashback, or the same in-depth things with the characters. We have to strip that down. It's totally different from *Batman* because we can't rely on the same inside joke, the tweaking of comic books. So, the story is being pushed more in the direction of science fiction. We have a new third act for *Watchmen* which is going to work out the whole alternate universe/different time stream/Dr. Manhattan seeing the future plot element in a different way from the comic. Hopefully, we won't lose the ideological thrust."

Watchmen Art: Dave Gibbons/Trademark & Copyright 1987 DC Comics Inc.

You won't be watching all the Watchmen. While Dr. Manhattan, the Comedian, Silk Spectre, Ozymandias, Nite-Owl and Rorschach will still be seen, Captain Metropolis and the Minutemen won't make it to the silver screen.

In addition to reworking the third act, it was decided to limit the main characters to Dr. Manhattan, Rorschach, Nite Owl, Silk Spectre, Comedian and Ozymandias. "In this draft anyway, we're losing the Minutemen," Hamm reveals. "Just in terms of getting a straightforward line, it's nightmare enough to introduce six major characters *without* having to also introduce their predecessors."

After DC Comics publisher Jenette Kahn mentioned in a phone conversation that producer Joel Silver didn't have a writer for *Watchmen*, Hamm decided he would like a crack at the script. "I told both Jenette Kahn and Alan Moore that I would rather screw it up than have some nameless yoyo who was doing the job for hire do it, because at least I have respect for comics.

"In certain ways, *Watchmen* is harder than *Batman*," Hamm continues. "In certain ways, *Watchmen* is easier because you don't have to go through the same process of trying to make everything logical and rational. At some point, you have to accept that there is a world in which superheroes exist. That's not a thing you have to accept in *Batman*. If you accept that as the basic premise of *Watchmen*, it makes it much easier. It makes getting characters into costume easier. And the fact that they're all *former* superheroes makes that easier.

"The gimmick, the hard thing, is to get the audience acclimated to a different set of rules. While it's totally old hat in science fiction and comic books, there has never been an alternative universe movie, a real 'What if this had happened and the course of history had been different?' That's the doubly hard thing to do in *Watchmen*, to make the audience feel like they're playing by a whole new set of rules that is not based on a historical event. It's not like, 'What if the Nazis had won World War II?' It's not anything you can relate to. It's 'What if there was a Superman as of 1960? And what does that do to foreign policy?' That's ostensibly a very frivolous thing on which to base a story. That's the challenge of doing it."

—Carr D'Angelo

Features.

The Protector. New comics character property developed by Marvel & Warner Bros.

The Punisher. Movie. Boaz Yakin is scripting. Greenlighted for "go-ahead." Reportedly to film this summer for New World Pictures.

Reid Fleming, World's Toughest Milkman. In development at Warner Bros.

The Rocketeer. Movie in development at Disney. Bill Dear will direct. Script by Danny Bilson & Paul De Meo.

Sgt. Rock. Movie to star Arnold Schwarzenegger. David Peoples is scripting. Joel Silver, producer.

The Shadow. Movie. Scripted by Howard Franklin. Martin Bregman, producer.

The She-Hulk. Marvel Productions TV project with Viacom.

The Silver Surfer. Long-announced live-action movie dead. Animated mini-series in development at New World.

Spider-Man. Cannon Films version "in production." Scripted by Shepard Goldman. Albert Pyun, director. Animated Spider-Man segments will be part of *Marvel Universe* syndicated series.

Sub-Mariner. Script by Joe Brancato & Ted Newsom.

Superboy. Proposed half-hour TV series to be produced by Alexander & Ilya Salkind. Announced for a fall debut.

Superman. Despite critical response to *Superman IV*, Cannon Films has announced a *Superman V* in "pre-production." This film is *not* viewed as a "certainty." An animated series is in development at Ruby-Spears.

Swamp Thing. TV movie, *Return of the Swamp Thing*, for Showtime airing. Michael Uslan & Ben Melnicker, producers. Bill Malone, director.

Tales from the Crypt. Cable series being piloted.

Thor. TV sitcom proposed, but apparently dead. Character is also in *The Incredible Hulk Returns*, functioning as a pilot spin-off for a *Thor* series, too. Animated series in development.

Tin-Tin. Movie still in development at Amblin Entertainment. "On the back burner."

Watchmen. Movie. Scripted by Sam Hamm. Producer, Joel Silver. (see article.)

The Wizard of Id. Movie (with songs). Scripted by Steven de Souza, singer/actor Paul Williams & strip creator Johnny Hart.

Wolverine. Movie in development. Script treatment by Chris Claremont.

The X-Men. Animated TV series pilot from New World.

Zippyvision. Movie scripted by Bill Griffith & Diane Noomin, featuring Zippy the Pinhead.

Zorro. Live-action, half-hour TV series, *Zorro—The Legend Continues*, in preparation co-produced by New World Enterprises & France's Ellipse Programme.

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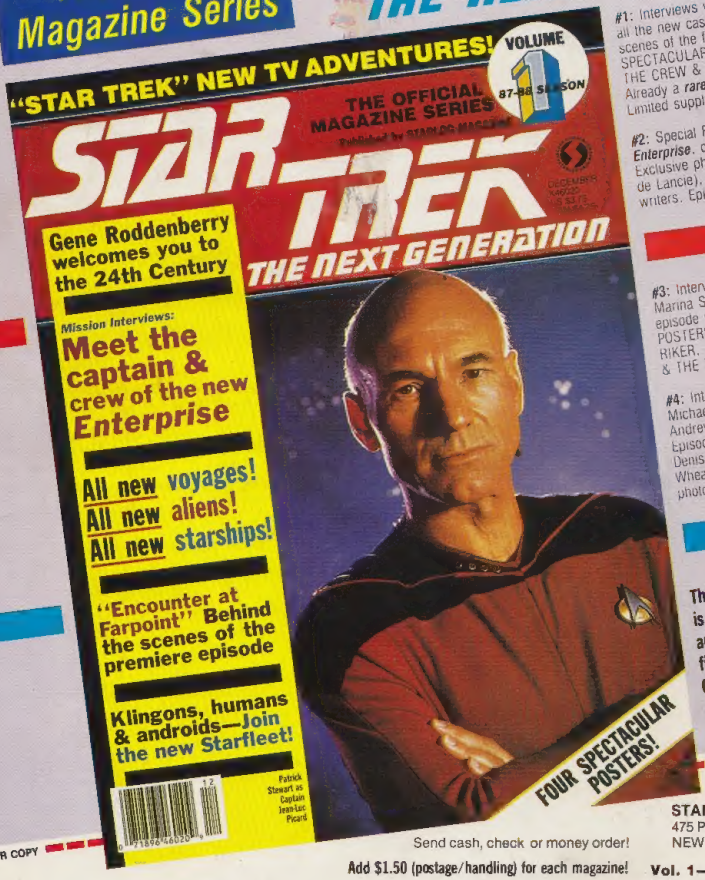
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